

Four capitals of Ancient Rus



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Abstract. A historical article – the author's reflection on the past of our homeland. Questions, secrets, hypotheses let each reader will feel like an explorer and pioneer of ancient mysteries. The initial stage of Rus' development is researched in the paper, and this very period of the princes' reign is defined as ancient in chronological understanding.

It is intended for all people who are concerned and searching, doubting and thinking, daring and walking along the road of knowledge.

Key words: *Slavs, Rus, the Varangians, Kiev, Byzantium, Sviatoslav, Bulgaria, prince, konung.*

Problem statement

Since the earliest times, rulers have tried to perpetuate their names in the memory of descendants: majestic monuments, low-reliefs and inscriptions are evidence of their deeds. Since the appearance of a written language, the authorities have been praised and ridiculed in verse and prose. Philosophers have tried to synthesize the mechanisms of equitable social order, and the chroniclers recorded the milestones of appearance and disappearance of states and ruling dynasties.

After the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula (The Autonomous Republic of Crimea), the President of the Russian Federation - V. Putin declared: «We are one nation. Kiev is the mother of Rus' cities.» Thus the archaic quotation became a political slogan.

The history of each state has many secrets. Sadly, politicians at all times tried to "rewrite" the history to their advantage. But historical myths are not mere history misinterpretation. The distorted history becomes the basis for confrontation between states and peoples and leads to armed conflicts.

Fascist and communist regimes are not the only ones that succeeded in the perversion of history. Their predecessors – the imperial courts of Europe and Asia, the kings and pharaohs of the Ancient World – were also very active here.

Therefore, the main task of the modern researchers is an impartial study of all historical facts. Moreover, intolerance towards everyone else's opinion and imposition of their own point of view is a characteristic feature of the totalitarian ideology. Objective assessment of events will allow finding the right decision of modern socio-cultural and political and economic issues.

Today, speculations around the history of Rus continue. The fallacy of the Normannic and Anti - Normannic theories excite the minds of politicians and the public. The states that emerged on the territory, which for a long time was part of the Russian Empire, locked horns in an ideological battle for the mental and spiritual heritage of the Eastern-Slavic Union – the Rus.

One of the myths, that pseudo-patriots from both sides of virtual and real barricades use, is the well-known phrase from the chronicles: «Kiev is the mother of Rus' cities.»

But does the ancient history have to do with the modern geopolitical processes?

What is the point of referring to out-of-the-way items of information and ambiguous phrases and facts to justify your actions?

And if we talk about the Crimea, it is indisputable that a large number of Russians live on its territory, and it is also evident that practically all the inhabitants of the peninsula speak Russian. Nobody will doubt the fact that these lands were conquered by the Russian Empire and for a long time, until its collapse in the course of the civil war, were its part.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that the native peoples who inhabited the Crimean Peninsula (Karaites, Greeks, Crimeans and Crimean Tatars), as well as representatives of other ethnic groups (Ukrainians, Russians, Gagauz, Bulgarians and Jews) migrated to the Northern Black Sea territory from ancient times. It should be also kept in mind that in the 1990s, after the dissolution of the USSR into 15 sovereign states, the inhabitants of the Crimean Peninsula became citizens of Ukraine.

But if we talk about the «the great and mighty Russian language,» it should be mentioned that it, like other Eastern Slavic languages, is a dialect of the Slavic language, the alphabet and written language of which are synthesized by Equal-to-the-Apostles Cyril and Methodius and their followers.

Trying to «build bridges between fraternal peoples,» politicians provoke the appearance and expansion of geopolitical conflicts between ethnic groups and states.

Let us leave the analysis of the current events to the discretion of future historians and without any speculations and assumptions focus on such questions:

Why, who and under what circumstances said the phrase «Kiev is the mother of Rus' cities»?

Who, when and under what circumstances founded Kiev? Were Kyi, Shchek and Khoryv Russians?

Rus, Normans, Vikings, Varangians: fiction or reality?

How and when was Rus added to Kiev, and how and when did Kiev become the capital of Rus?

Is Kiev the first capital of Rus and the «mother of Rus' cities»? What does the phrase «Kiev is the mother of Rus' cities» mean?

Where was the capital of Rus during the reign of princes Igor and Sviatoslav I?

Let us not theorize and hypothesize. Thomas Henry Huxley wrote:

«All truth is born as heresy and dies as a superstition. The eternal tragedy of science: ugly facts kill all interesting hypotheses.»

Thomas Henry Huxley

We will ask questions and try to find answers together. Of course it is not always possible to find a comprehensive answer to every question.

Perhaps a number of issues need to be revisited several times. And it will not be wrong to view some facts from different perspectives and angles, based on assumptions and hypothesis which will be made in the course of the search.

We will develop our findings, speculations, hypothesis, ideas, and assumptions relying on written and archaeological sources available for investigation. Let us try to get to the bottom of the answers to these and other questions that arise when studying the history of Rus.

Kyi, Shchek and Khoryv are rulers and founders of Kiev

Deeply ideological historians with imperial attitudes keep discussing the issue that in ancient times the Rus people inhabited almost all Europe and also Asia. In their opinion, the Etruscans are ancient Russians who lived in Italy. And the tribes «Rugii» or «Ruzhi» are undoubtedly Russians. Therefore, according to such fantasists from history, some Rosses, the ancestors of Russians, lived on the territory of Porossia, the basin of the Ros River and its tributaries. And these Ross-Etruscan had been roaming about the continent until they set up the state of Russia. The first prince of Ross, the adepts of this version think, was a certain Russ-Ross. They claim that he or his descendant founded Kiev. And that Oskold, whose name comes from the Oskol river, was the last prince from the Kievish dynasty. And so on and so forth. As a result, there is an alternative history.

Of course, it is difficult to challenge such arguments. No truth can spring from an argument with such statements. The answers can be found on the yellowed pages of the chronicles and on the bottom of archaeological excavations. But one has to work hard to find them. And there is always a simple and direct argument to the «noise» that prevents the research. For example, there was no such state as Russia, there was the Moscow kingdom, then the Russian Empire, and later the Russian Federation, initially as part of the USSR, and after the collapse of the Union – independently.

So, first of all, let us refer to the legend about the foundation of Kiev. The famous *The Tale of Bygone Years* written, according to the traditional opinion, by the Kiev chronicler, monk of the Kiev Pechersk Monastery Nestor, testifies that Kiev was founded by three brothers – Kyi, Shchek and Khoryv. Kyi, Shchek and Khoryv were princes, who are mentioned in *The Tale of Bygone* the founders

of Kiev. The chronicle also mentions their sister – Lybid.

Nowadays, some «leading political scientists» zealously defend the concept of «Rusians – Russians» in their online publications, with the opponents of «Rusians – Ukrainians» contradicting them, and thus, the question arises:

Were the founders of Kiev – Kyi, Shchek and Khoryv and their sister Lybid – Russians?

Since when were the Eastern Slavs «Russified» and became Rusians, or Russians, or was it vice versa?

What sources confirmed the Ukrainian origin of the first princes of Kiev?

And not to make wild guesses, let us refer to the primary sources. Of course, the online political scientists can protest: «What is the chronicle for us? The chronicle is not a dogma. Chronicles are falsified...»

Dear Sirs, the chronicle is the source, and your fantasies based on ignorance, lack of knowledge and reluctance are not worth a dime.

Here is how it is described in the chronicle:

«The Polanians lived separately in those days and governed their families; for even before these brothers (of whom we write further) there were Polanians, and they lived with their families in their places, and each was governed independently. And there were three brothers: one named Kyi, another - Shchek and the third - Khoryv, and their sister - Lybid. Kyi sat on the mountain where Borychev's climb is now, and Shchek sat on the mountain, which is called Shchekovitsa now, and Khoryv was on the third mountain, which was named after him Khoryvitsa. And they built a city in honor of the eldest brother and called it Kiev. There were a forest and a large pinewood around the city, and animals were hunted there, and those men were wise and clever, and they were called Polanians, and since then Polanians live in Kiev.»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

So, the Polonians were Kyi's kind, and they were ruling for a long time. And some of them were Kyi's descendants, and until the beginning of the XI century, when the first chronicles were written, they lived in Kiev.

Further the chronicler focuses on two important details: first, the fact that Kyi was not a ferryman, and, secondly, that he visited Constantinople where he was met with «great honors.» This Nestor's comment allows us to conclude that Kyi served the Byzantine emperor for some time. Many representatives of the noble Eastern European families did that.

It is interesting that the discussions of the fact if Kyi was a ferryman or was not continued for more than two centuries.

Is Kyi's origin really so important, and if so, why?

What meaning did Kyi's origin have for the Rurik dynasty?

When did Kyi rule and could he rule when the Varangians came to the Dnieper region?

The appearance of Kyi on the Dnieper refers to the times of the conflict between the Slavs, the Avars and the Byzantines. The forest-steppe part of the Middle Dnieper region was probably safe at that period. Perhaps, the prince left his possessions in care of his father or grandfather (unfortunately, their names are not in the chronicles), or his brothers Shchek and Khoryv.

Moreover, we can claim that Kyi and his family were connected with trade, they may have owned a number of customs stations and thus were involved in trade and economic relations between East and West.

«Some people say, without knowing, that Kyi was a ferryman; there was a ferry on one side of the Dnieper at that time, so they said, «To the ferry to Kiev.» If Kyi was a ferryman, he would not have visited Constantinople; and that Kyi was a prince, and when he visited the tsar, people say, he was met with great honors. On his way back he approached the Danube and picked a land spot, and built a town, and wanted to live there with his family,

but the people living around did not let him do that; the people living near the Danube still call the town Kievets. Kyi returned to his city Kiev where he died; and his brothers Shchek and Khoryv and their sister Lybid passed away here too. And after these brothers, their kind ruled the Polonians.»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

We will not say with 100% certainty that Kyi was a Polonian or a representative of some other ethnic group, or descended from a noble stem, for example, was a descendant of Attila, who had numerous offspring. But at the same time, as we see, the brothers were experienced and intelligent, they were held in respect of the Polonians on the land of which Kiev was built. It is also stated that Kyi went to Constantinople with a large army and was in favor of the tsar. Besides, Kyi victoriously fought on the Danube and founded a new town named Kievets. But later because of the conflicts with the local population he was forced to return home.

Let us assume that Kyi and his brothers – Slavs by origin – actively fought with the Avar Khaganate. They took the side of the triumvirate of the anti-Avar coalition: the Slavs, who founded the state of Samo, the Principality of Nitra, and Great Moravia; Bulgarians united by Kubrat I the Great into the state of Old Great Bulgaria and the main player in the Balkans and the Mediterranean – the Byzantine Empire.

The historian Boris Rybakov characterizes the activities of Prince Kyi in the following way:

«The ancient predecessor of Sviatoslav, the great Prince of Kiev, whose activities spread as far as the Danube banks, and diplomatic ties reached Constantinople.»

Boris Rybakov *The First Centuries of the Russian History*

Nestor names the date of the Khazar attack against Kiev – «after Kyi's death» which confirms the hypothesis of Rybakov – VI-VII century. Such famous historians as Alexei Shakhmatov and Alexander Presnyakov support the idea that the Prince Kyi really existed and speak about his reign.

Let us not join the discussions about the date of foundation of Kiev. This dispute is based on the meager archaeological findings scattered around the huge space of the modern metropolis. In their eagerness to prove their position, some authors, based on materials (remains of dugouts, objects from cesspools, remains of villages, treasures and other things of different cultures and eras) claim that Kiev surpassed Rome, Paris and London together and was founded in the III millennium... Let us refer to the primary source:

«And there were three brothers: one named Kyi, another - Shchek and the third - Khoryv, and their sister - Lybid. Kyi sat on the mountain where Borychev's climb is now, and Shchek sat on the mountain, which is called Shchekovitsa now, and Khoryv was on the third mountain, which was named after him Khoryvitsa. And they built a city in honor of the eldest brother and called it Kiev. There were a forest and a large pinewood around the city, and animals were hunted there, and those men were wise and clever, and they were called Polanians, and since then Polanians live in Kiev.»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

Let us consider the hypotheses of the origin of the three brothers and their sister who founded Kiev.

The first version:

The princes were of local origin and were able to subdue under their authority the territory of the Middle Dnieper region. The princes took an active position in the relationship between the Byzantine Empire and the Avarian Khaganate. Afterwards under influence of the Slavic culture of the population of national union, formed by the brothers, became the core of the formation of the East Slavic subgroup.

The second version:

The princes came from Danube. They were appointees of the Byzantine imperial court. The brothers subdue to their authority a local non-Slavic population on the Dnepr. It is also of immense complexity to talk about the ethnic heritage of the princes. The names of Kyi, Shchek and Khoryv are almost not

mentioned among the Slavs, but in Poland, Moravia and other Slavic lands we come across of region's names, populated places and so on that sound similar. And the name of their sister Lybid is rather of Hungarian origin.

The third version:

The East Slavic tribe «Polanians» is ethnically connected with the Polish tribe of «Polanians.» The disintegration of the polyethnic and polyreligious Hunnish empire and the creation of aggressive Avarian Kaganate nudged the Slavs to expansion from the territory of the under-Danube on the territory of Eastern Europe. Perhaps this explains the hypothetical similarity of the name Khoryv to the Croats, and Schick to the Czechs.

Questionless, the Slavic troops from under-Danube, which became the arena of collision between the Romans and the Huns, and then between Byzantines and Avars, began to advance northward, and subsequently were conquering the forest-steppe territories to the North-East of its original disposition.

Each of the versions has the right to exist. It is still too early to make it final in the discussion. We can state that Kyi and his comrades-in-arms in the Middle Dnieper region were more conquerors than autochthonous inhabitants. And on the subjugated territory rulers built the Kiev city.

A number of scientists believe that we are dealing with the names of families, and the family «Lybed» is of Hungarian or Bulgarian origin. According to the archaeologist S.I. Klimovsky, the author of the book «Where, When and Why Kiev arose,» the settlers founded a number of fortifications - «towns,» which later merged into one city called Kiev. In fact the names have collective character and mean that the Czechs, Kievish, Croats and Hungarians took part in the creation of state.

The Tale of Bygone Years does not contain information about the date of death of Prince Kyi about his heirs and about who continued the reign after his death. There is only an answer of city residents to Askold and Dir who came there:

«Whose city is this?» "The builders of it, three brothers, have long since passed away, and we are now paying tribute to the Khazars.»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

So, when the Varangians arrived in Kiev, its founders had already died, and the city was dependent on the Khazars. Nevertheless, some historians defend the versions about the successors of the first Kiev princes, and about whole Kiev dynasty – the Kievish.

The country of Kuyavia is mentioned in a number of Arabic chronicles. It was neighbor to Slavia and Artania, and those in turn - with the northern borders of Byzantium and Khazaria. But alas information about the ruling dynasties of these states was not preserved. Therefore, there are no compelling reasons to confirm or refute the hypothesis that the successors of Kyi ruled in Kiev before the arrival of the Varangians Askold and Dir.

An important fact of this story is that Kiev since the ancient times was the capital of the Slavic tribe and was called "Polanians." Herewith, Kyi, Shchek and Khoryv were not Russians. And certainly not Russians. It is obvious. Russians as an ethnos began to form after the collapse of the Golden Horde in the XIV-XV centuries based on the cooperation of the autochthonous Finno-Ugric population and the foreign passionate Slavic element from the Balkans and the Bulgar from the Volga region. We can talk about the formation of the modern nation only with emerging of the Moscow kingdom.

At the same period the formation of the Ukrainian ethnos has began. The core of it was the population of the Middle Dnieper region: Cherkasy, Mamai, Cossacks, Kovui, formerly called Torkil, Berendeys and Chorni Klobuky.

But for the political elite of the Post-Soviet states, the important factor was always the opinion that the princes belonged to the Slavic ethnos, and accordingly, the wise leaders, the predecessors of the Communist Party, knew where and why to go, and what to do. According to the party «chiefs,» the Slavic «eaders» already in those old times laid the foundations of collective farming and

public ownership of production, family and state relations.

However, it should be noted that the Slavic ethnos, at the times of Kyi, including the Eastern Slavic branch, were in the stage of formation. Assumptions and guesses, engrained stereotypes and myths, as well as politization of this question by Romanovski and Stalin scientists, created a whole dogmatic teaching about the Slavic empire that existed in the vast scope of Eurasia since the ancient times. Some devoted people are ready to seriously say that the Slavs lived during the Mesozoic era.

In this context, it is much more pragmatic to write a history using the approach, in accordance with which the history of the state is studied. At the same time, all cultures, peoples, events that took place on one or another territory are to be investigated without tendentious attachment to the «Titular nation», «state-forming ethnic group» and other discriminatory definitions. For example, in Turkey no one tries to identify the Turks with the ancient Trojans and at the same time does not hide in archives the artifacts of the ancient civilizations that existed on the territory of the republic.

But the fragments of empires that existed on the territory of Europe, inherited the peculiar to nations hypertrophied sickness of chauvinism. Until now the capitals of some states claim the role of the Third Rome. The first Rome is Rome. The second Rome is Constantinople (Tsargrad, Istanbul). St. Petersburg, Moscow and Berlin in different times called themselves The third Rome.

There are still discussions around the «Great Romania» – «from the sea to the sea,» «Great Ukraine» – «from the Sian to the Don,» «Great Russia» – «from the White to the Mediterranean Sea,» «Great Bulgaria» – «from the Volga to the Danube,» «Great Hungary» – «from the Alps to the Urals.» The absurdity of the claims is obvious. But the adepts of these ideas have been working tirelessly over their implementation for centuries.

And in order to continue our search for the origins of Rus, it is necessary to give answers to the next series of questions:

When and where did the state of Rus appear, and who was the first ruler of Rus?

Who are the «Rus» and from where did they come to the lands of North-Eastern Europe?

We will not dig deep into the analysis of the long standing argument between the Normanists and their opponents - the antinormanists. This discourse will be discussed in the future. A brief plot of events based on facts derived from authentic written sources is the basis of our searches.

It is evident that «Polanians» can't be identified with «Rus,» and Kiev initially could not be the first city in Rus, since at that time there was simply no Rus at these lands. And the nationality (or estate) «Rus» lived in the Baltic States. Therefore, fantasies on the subject that «Rus» is «Ros», and «Ros» – Roxolani or Huns, Scythians-plowmen and others, can be more easily classified as a fiction book than scientific research. And we will return to the question of the ancestral homeland of the Slavs at the pages of the following expeditionary intelligence to the Middle Ages.

Kiev appeared much earlier than Rus, as the state and afterwards as the empire. The city of Kiev was founded not by the Rus people, but by the Slavs. Kyi and his family were in no way connected with the Baltic states. Kyi established ties with the Byzantine Empire and even tried to settle on the Danube. Kiev was not the only city in the vast scope of Eastern Europe. Excavations of a number of cities: Belsky (Poltava), Pastyr (Cherkasy region) testify about close economical and trade connection between the local community and inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula.

The first capital of Rus

«Varangians», «calling of the Varangians»... - these terms and phrases denote aliens who take over the rule. «Varangians» are foreign people that come without invitation and leave without thanking. Invaders, enslavers are not in

favor in all nations. And at the same time representatives of modern civilization traditionally admire the strength, skill and military art inherent for the winners. Scientists and politicians argue about the origin, tribe of the Varangians for over three hundred years.

So, it is evident that Kiev arose much earlier than «Rus» appeared in the Dnieper region as a certain community of people and as a state. It is also evident that Kiev later became the capital of Rus.

The competitors of Kiev in the struggle for primacy in Rus were always two cities - Chernigov and Novgorod. To prove claims for the primacy, the local chroniclers tried in every possible way to make the roots of the rulers more ancient. Everyone wanted to lead his race from Alexander the Great or «at worst» from Julius Caesar.

In Chernigov a legend about Prince Cherniy was developed. And in Novgorod, a legend about the ruler Gostomysle, who gave his daughter Umila for the Varangian Rurik and whose son Slaven founded Izborsk.

At the same time any of us hardly can name at least one of the states in the Northeast Europe before the appearance of Rus. Or remember at least one source in which would be described the earlier political events in the region, rather than *The Tale of Bygone Years*.

Therefore, we can certainly say that the first state formation that was created in the territory of North-Eastern Europe is the state of the Varangians Rurik, Sineus and Truvor. In history the formation of the principalities of Rurik is called «The Calling of the Varangians.» This term has already become a common name.

Rus, Normans, Vikings, Varangians: fiction or reality?

Did the Varangians have a capital on the territory from which they came from?

Where was this unknown capital?

The first version:

The Varangians are warriors of Scandinavian origin (Danes, Norwegians, Swedes) who barged in the territory of

Eastern Europe and founded their states here after subjecting local Finno-Ugric tribes.

The second version:

The Varangians are the most active part of the West Slavic population (the Polabian Slavs, Obotrites), who due to the military expansion of the Germanic tribes were forced to move to the lands of the kindred Eastern Slavs and on the territory of Finno-Ugric in Preilmen. And create there a base for the fight against the conquerors - the Germans from the Teutonic Order and the Swedes.

The third version:

The Varangians are an active part of the population (military class) from Baltic nations, which during the Age of Viking accomplished expansion to Eastern Europe, where together with the local population they created state formations. Subsequently the Varangian principality united in the state of Rus.

Each of the versions is not without some idealistic concept of little-known pages in the history of our continent. It is incontestable that in those old times in the North of Europe the history was created by the Baltic inhabitants (Vikings, The Varangians, Rus people). Nationhood in the territory of North-Eastern Europe was established by martial northerners. In accordance with the available written sources, as well as peoples legends recorded in later times, but still belonging to the era of the early Middle Ages, we can confirm that the Rus is the first state in the territory of the Southern Baltic.

At the same time it should be noted that on the lands to which «Rus» belonged, there was its own capital. Who knows was it in the Baltic or Scandinavia. Versions, hypotheses, assumptions... But this question also goes beyond the subject of our research.

After such divagation, which may help to penetrate deeper into the relationship in medieval society, we return to the main subject of the study.

When «Rus» has appeared in Kiev and who headed «Rus»? Was it a conquest or a peaceful migration?

**Which city was the first capital of Rus?
Who and when founded the first capital?
How many capitals were there in Rus?**

Often, based on the study of Old Norse languages, the researchers treat the word «Rus» as oarsmen. In this case it seems that Rurik brought his own race to a new place of habitation, as well as poor, free and common soldiers - oarsmen. If in Scandinavia and Baltic their perspective was only participation in endless treks, here they immediately had the possibility to obtain lands and power, to become high-placed and high powered people in society.

Deep rivers and endless lakes, primeval forests and impassable swamps with a rare population met their new rulers.

Three brothers: Rurik, Sineus and Truvor, along with his troop (the Varangians) came to Ladoga land. It is still too early to talk about Russian lands at this stage of history in the IX century. But we understand that later, in XIV century, these territories will become one of the centers of the formation of Russian state.

According to *The Tale of Bygone Years*, in year 862 the Northern Baltic tribes called Varangians for the «reign» – «Rus» headed by Rurik – the founder and first ruler of the state of Rus. It was Rurik who led the large grouping «Rus» into Baltic.

The Chronicler underlines that Rus is not the ethnic name of the Normans or Slavs, but the name that these peoples used (and others took from them) regarding the military group of society and princely troop itself.

Professional soldiers «Rus» due to cohesion and military training were able to subdue to their power several separated Finno-Ugric tribes which were living in the North-East of Europe.

Although this historical fact does not quite fit into the subject of this study, let's note that the chronicler especially emphasizes that the first population on the lands occupied by Rurik were «Slavs,» then the Rurik family came to these lands – «Rus», and the Novgorodians are of Varangian family. Complicated and convoluted. But it is still necessary to understand these ethnic-political intricacies.

At a time when the origin, attitude towards the clan, vassal dependence were not

only socially and politically significant, it was up to them whether a person had the right to live. Indeed, an outlaw (man of unknown antecedents) could be killed by anyone with impunity. The chroniclers very subtly differentiated generic and supergeneric relations.

Considering the complexity of questions connected to the history of Varangians, should be paid close attention to the pages of the next review.

On the conquered lands, the brothers Rurik, Sineus and Truvor set a number of fortresses. The main city was - the setting of older brother - Rurik.

Let's turn to the history of the appearance of Varangians in the Baltic lands. The Chronicle says:

«In the year 6370 (862). And three brothers were elected with their families, and they took with them all the Rus, and they first came to the Slovens, and they set the city of Ladoga. And the older brother Rurik sat in Ladoga, and the other Sineus in Beloozero, and the third Truvor in Izborsk. And from those Varangians the land was named Rus land. Novgorodians are the same people from Varangian race, but before they were Slovenes.»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

In order to take hold of still restless areas, Varangians built first city-fortress, its first capital Ladoga in the lower reaches of the Volkhov River, in the Ilmenslavs lands.

The city, known as Aldeigjuborg (Ladoga), according to Scandinavian custom, was located not on the shore, but ten miles from Volkhov, where the small town of Staraya Ladoga is now located. From Ladoga, Rurik controlled the «volost,» he executed the court, its walls served as a firm shelter for Varangians from the raids of local tribes. At the head of the state was the oldest of the brothers – Rurik (862-879).

Thus, the first capital of Rus was Ladoga (now Old Ladoga). Nowadays in this place the community of Staraya Ladoga is located. Remains of fortifications preserved to this days. From Ladoga the

first sovereign of Rus carried out his rule – Rurik.

Rus and Kiev

From ancient times the basis of nationhood was sovereignty. If the state is sovereign it is independent in its foreign and domestic policies. The loss of sovereignty is the loss of independence. Now the state-forming substance – the sovereign of the majority of states are citizens. They democratically determine the structure of the state. But in the Middle Ages, the sovereign of the state was the ruler or the ruling family. Commanders, soldiers and subjects identified themselves with him.

Together with Rurik, a large Varangian army came to the lands of North-Eastern Europe. Many of the Varangians did not share Rurik's policy, which was the gradual submission of local native tribes and the creation of the Varangian state. First of all, they were interested in spoils, which could be received during plunder treks.

Rurik was quite satisfied with the role of the powerful king-konung, who owns territories much more extensive than his colleagues-konungs who ruled Denmark, Sweden and Norway. But more ambitious and pragmatic personalities surrounded him. Like a magnet they were drawn to the golden domes of Constantinople and Mediterranean luxury.

Therefore, at a time when Rurik was strengthening the internal structure of his state, his two team-mate, not relatives of the konung, but «boyars» - soldiers of noble origin Askold and Dir, along with their troops, asked Rurik to go on a campaign against Constantinople.

Konung gave them his permission, thus stopping the beginning of mutiny and using his political opponents, who have considerable authority among the troops, for further advance of the Varangians to the South.

«...and above all those Rurik ruled. And he had two men, not his relatives, but the

boyars, and they asked to take off to Constantinople with their family.»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

How did Rus appear in Kiev? How did Kiev become the capital of Rus?

Who and under what circumstances pronounced the phrase «Kiev - mother of Rus' cities»?

Scientists, exploring the life of Askold and Dir, make a number of suggestions.

The first version:

The Varangians Askold and Dir were conquerors. They captured Kiev and made it the base for their pirate campaigns against the onshore cities of the Black Sea. And Prince Oleg, the representative of ruler of Rus, the regent of the young son of Rurik – Igor, freed the Kievans from the power of the robber.

The second version:

The voivodes Askold and Dir liberated Kiev and Polanians from the power of the Khazar Khaganate. The city became the capital of a small Varangian principality and afterwards connected to the state created by Rurik.

The third version:

The ruler of Kiev – Dir from the dynasty of the Kievish recognized the power of the Khazar Khagan. And his descendant Askold was freed from this dependence. But after an unsuccessful campaign against Constantinople and adoption of Christianity, he lost the support of the local elite. Voivode of Rurik – Oleg, used this opportunity and took over the power. After Askold's death, the usurper Oleg made Kiev the capital of the Varangian state in Eastern Europe.

And again in each version there is a certain grain of truth.

Thoughts that Askold and Dir were descendants of Kyi don't have actual confirmation. The similarity of names and geographical names, for example, Askold and the Oskol River, as well as some transcriptions with ethnonyms of Arab sources can be very cautiously considered as a basis for constructing of hypotheses and versions.

Let us see the annalistic facts which are ascribed by Nestor the Chronicler.

Moving up on the Lovat river, flowing from the South to the North, and then, dragging their ships to the Dnepr, and descending down on it, Askold and Dir came to Kiev, which was under the rule of the Khazar Khagan. Having seen the city on the Dnepr, Askold and Dir asked: «Whose city is this?» and the locals answered:

«In the year 6370 (862). And above all those Rurik ruled. And he had two men, not his relatives, but the boyars, and they asked to take off to Constantinople with their family. And they set off along the Dnepr, and when they were passing by, they saw a small town on the mountain. And they asked: «Whose city is this?» And they answered: "There were three brothers, Kyi, Shchek and Khoryv, who built this town and disappeared, but we are staying here, their descendants, and we pay tribute to the Khazars.»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

The short answer of the people of Kiev, depicted in the chronical, shows that during the appearance of the Vikings on the political arena in the Northern Black Sea region, the Slavic nationhood (the state of Kuyavia) was greatly weakened. Constant wars with the Sarmatian-Alanian steppe peoples of the Black Sea and the Azov Sea regions: the Ghetto (Goths), Huns (Proto-Bulgarians), Avars (Obri), Geruls, Gepids and others weakened Slavic peoples. As a result the Eastern Slavs were forced to recognize first the rule of the Khazars, and then - the Varangians ("Rus").

«Askold and Dir stayed in this city, collected a lot of Varangians and began to own the land of Polanians. Rurik reigned in Novgorod.»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

Judging from the chronicle narration, Varangians – «Rus» Askold and Dir arrived in Kiev and took over the power in the second half of the IX century. So, Kiev became Russian only from the moment of appearance of Varangians in the city – the voivodes of Rurik

and their troops. Rusian, but not a part of Rus as a state.

Askold and Dir during certain time were the lieges of Rurik, they did not belong to his «Rus» family, but were Varangians. Therefore, it is not quite correct to believe that the voivodes have annexed the Kiev land to Rus. At the same time, we have already found out what connected the history of Kiev with the history of Varangians – «Rus.»

With the arrival of Varangian troops of Askold and Dir Kiev did not become the capital of Rus.

The state of Rus with its capital in Ladoga at this time is situated in hundreds of kilometers to the North. Kiev at this stage of history is a town liberated from the Khazar domination, in which Varangian voivodes rule.

In this period of history it is difficult to talk about Kiev as the capital of the Polian tribal union. Rather, it can be stated that Kiev during the reign of Askold and Dir was the center of a separate district or voivodeship as part of Varangian state formation. It is even more correct to assume that Kiev, after being captured by the Varangian voivodes, who separated from the majority of «Rus,» is the advance outpost, the base where Scandinavian detachments and troops from among the local population gathered and prepared for military expeditions.

Looking ahead, we can define periods of history when Kiev could be considered the capital of statehood on the territory of Eastern Europe:

1. Kiev - the capital of the state of Kyi, and then follows a period when the Polianians become dependent on the Khazar Khaganate, and Kiev becomes one of the cities in all of the empire.

2. Kiev - the capital of Varangians Askold and Dir, a kind of state association, similar to the state of pirates –Libertal, living on trade and robbery.

3. Kiev - the capital of Rus, until the period of fragmentation, when it stopped to be the headquarter of an autocratic ruler, supreme commander-in-chief, but became the capital of the state.

The conglomerate of states in the territory of Eastern Europe during the period of «fragmentation» was in fact a federation of

principalities that had significant ethno-cultural and political-economic characteristics, but united by the relations of the dynastic ruling and the one official religion – Orthodoxy. Here it should be paid attention to the fact that headquarter of the metropole was Kiev.

Consequently, Kiev stopped function as the capital in Grand Duchy of Lithuania and in Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

During the Liberation War and the formation of Ukraine as a Cossack republic led by the hetman, Cossack capitals were: Chigirin, Gadyach, Baturin, Glukhov. So, the capital of the state was located where was hetman – the elected ruler.

The capital of Zaporizhian Lower Army was the main city - Sich. Zaporizhian Sich is the first capital of the Cossack state. The main city, not a small fortress. Zaporizhian Sich on the island of Khortitsa occupied land area of all northern part of the island, as well as a significant territory – the Upper Khortitsa on the right bank of the Dnepr. Natural heights defended the capital of the Zaporizhian Lower Army from enemy attacks. On the Khortitsa island and the adjunct grounds earthworks were preserved. In the days of Hetman Petro Konashevych-Sahaidachny, some of them were reconstructed. Underwater archaeologists till this day find parts of the ships near the Cossack dockyards, where the ships were redone after passing the rapids and after returning from campaigns against Turkish fortresses which located on the shores of the Black Sea.

After Ukraine lost its independence, Kiev for a long period of time was one of the principal towns of province of the Russian Empire.

4. Kiev is the capital of Ukraine, during the Liberation fight of the Ukrainian people in the early twentieth century. The capital of the republic during the entry of Ukraine as part of the USSR. The capital of an independent Ukrainian state.

Thus, it should not be said that Kiev became the capital of Rus when captured by the Varangians Askold and Dir. During their reign Kiev was not the capital of "Rus", as an ethnos (class, troop) and as

a state, but was rather the advance outpost, territory which was colonized by the Varangians, a military base for robbery of local population, trade caravans and for campaign against Greek cities, located on the shores of the Black Sea. The city of Ladoga at this stage continues to be the capital of Rus, where ruled the founder of the Rurik dynasty – Konung Rurik I.

The second capital of Rus

Nation that doesn't know its history is doomed to oblivion. Every society is proud of the outstanding people who were born on its land. In tales and legends they glorify heroic events of the past times. For example, Turks proudly demonstrated the ruins of Troy and Greek cities. They are proud of their history which is connected with heroic deeds of Alexander the Great and the activity of powerful rulers of the Ottoman Empire. The Ukrainians who inherited the lands of the Northern Black Sea Coast, have a lot to be proud of. From ancient times there existed states: Scythian kingdom, Bosphorian kingdom, Hunnic Empire, Old Great Bulgaria.

Each of these states had its own history, rulers and capitals. This story is depicted on the pages of ancient chronicles by Herodotus, Mauritius Stratogus, Strabo, Jordan, Constantine Porphyrogenitus and many others. It is ignobly not to know your history, not to honor your forefathers who have built nationhood, laid the foundations of civilization.

But let us return to the questions about Ancient Rus.

How long Ladoga was the capital of Rus? Which city took palm of victory from Ladoga?

Where Rurik did transferred the capital of Rus and what events preceded it?

The following events occurred in Rus after the departure of Askold and Dir. The Rurik's brothers died. The prince subjected to his authority the ample territories of North-Eastern Europe, occupied by Finno-Ugric tribes.

For effective control of the territories, new capital was needed, in more convenient location than Ladoga. Such location undoubtedly should have been at the crossing of trade routes. The best one was a village on the Volkhov River. It is unlikely possible to find the original name of this village. Perhaps, Volkhov. The railway station of Veliky Novgorod is called Novgorod-on-Volkhov. It was located on Volkhov River, the only river flowing from Lake Ilmen into Lake Ladoga.

Here we will not keep intrigue, but we will name that city, which for a long time became North Palmyra of Rus and for a long time was the second most important city after Kiev. In fact, with the collapse of Rus on some apanage principalities and with the lost of their independence in the fight against the Golden Horde, this city became an independent state with a republican type of state power. Consequently, a new city became a capital of Rus – Novgorod.

Its independence and global political significance in the Baltic region, Novgorod or as its inhabitants called it: «Sir Novgorod the Great», lost after the seizure of the Baltic region of the Moscow kingdom, and the economic value of main trade and economic center in Northeast Europe with the construction and transfer of capital of Russian Empire to St. Petersburg.

More profitable location of Novgorod, unlike Ladoga, contributed to the growth of the power of Rurik I. The new capital was located at the crossing of Volga and Dnieper segments of «the Great Silk Road», that linked China, India with the Scandinavian countries, as well as Scandinavia with Byzantium.

To further increase the age of «Nova Grada,» some scientists use even older manuscripts. In accordance with this approach in the VIII century, Novgorod Prince Bravlin attacked Sudak.

As you known, the date of «birth» of location is the date of the first written mention of it. An attempt to deepen the history of

Veliky Novgorod to the times of the early Middle Ages, when the Novgorod prince Bravlin attacked Surozh (Sudak) is not well grounded. Here we are talking about Naples (Novgorod) located in the Crimea (Simferopol). The ruler of this city, the Tauri Scythae Bravlin, along with his troop, attacked the onshore Byzantine city Sudak.

Confusion in the understanding of sources is because medieval chroniclers gave their contemporaries and territories names, titles, etc., which the ancient authors used. But about that further more. Now we simply confirm the fact that Novgorod is neither the first nor the last capital of Rus. After all, we are talking about the state of Rus.

Rus as a state was not the only constant in the Northern Black Sea region. The greater part of Eastern Europe during the Middle Ages was occupied by states that had as their basis a steppe cattle-breeding economy and culture.

Speaking about the history of Ancient Rus, it should be emphasized that firstly, the term «Ancient Rus» is formal and reflects only the periodization: from the time of the appearance of the state and to the death of Prince Svyatoslav. And secondly, two main versions should be taken into account.

The first version:

The state of Rus really existed on the territory of Eastern Europe since ancient times and was the legal successor of long-standing states which located on these lands, in accordance with the written sources of Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. Its basis consisted of autochthonous Slavic, Turkic and Finno-Ugric peoples.

The second version:

Rus is collective name of various principalities that arose on the territory of Eastern Europe in the Middle centuries. They had no connection with the disappeared states created by the Scythians, Sarmatians, Alans and other ancient peoples. The attempts of authors of Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages to prove the reality of the connections between different peoples, the legal succession of ruling dynasties and the rest is nothing but fiction and falsification.

And if one researchers, that base on the first version, reason on poor archaeological finds and materials of ethnographic

expeditions, others ridicule Herodotus's excursions about the connections of Egypt and Georgia, and Jordan about the Scythian roots of the Getae kings.

Truth, as always, is somewhere in the middle.

Was Rus, in the period of Rurik's rule, a state in the full sense of the term or it was a kind of proto-state?

What features did Rus have in the period of reign of the first princes?

What was the administrative-territorial structure of Rus?

Rurik aspired to form the state inspired by the empire of Charles the Great. Rus during the reign of Rurik was a state in full understanding of this definition. The konung divided the land into eight districts and put voivode at the head of each. The voivode was obliged to collect tribute from a dependent race and if necessary provide troop for the ruler. So the voivode over the Krivichi was a trusted person and in the opinion of a number of researchers, Rurik's relative Oleg.

It is believed that the main cities of the Krivichi were Izborsk, Polotsk and Smolensk. Every quotation from the chronicle causes discussions. Based on the descriptions, which were left by the chronicler, we can endlessly propose more and more versions and endlessly raise questions. For example, if Oleg captured Smolensk during the campaign against Kiev, then it was not originally a city of the Krivichi. And in this case, there will be a number of new versions: perhaps the Krivichi union was not so powerful or at that time the union split into several parts and Oleg managed to unite them for the fight with his rivals on the grand-ducal rule.

As for Polotsk, the chronicles mention the Polotsk tribe. Perhaps it was part of a larger tribal conglomerate of the Krivichi. Polotsk is also better known as the city of Prince Rogvold – the opponent of Vladimir the Great. Vladimir «took» this city before going against Kiev. He killed the Prince of Polotsk, and married his daughter Rogneda. Rogneda's son, Yaroslav the Wise, becomes the Grand Duke later. Together with the Novgorodians, he will also have to go to Kiev against his brother Sviatopolk I Vladimirovich (son of

Yaropolk I Sviatoslavich and the Greek woman, later on Vladimir's concubine).

In the chronicles there are no mentions of the relationship between Rogvold and Oleg, Rogvold and Igor, Rogvold and Svyatoslav I, and possibly Rogvold and Rurik.

In this case, we can state the presence of four Varangians proto-state associations in the territory of Eastern Europe:

- The state of Askold and Dir;
- The state of Rogvolda;
- The State of Tura;
- The state of Rurik (actually Rus).

At that time the other Slavic and Turkic states existed in the Northern Black Sea Region, the Volga region and the Northern Caucasus. But their history is not the subject of our study.

It is difficult to say at what period Rogvold became the ruler of Polotsk. But after the death of Svyatoslav I, Rogvold feels confident enough to enter into the conflict with Vladimir, the son of the Grand Duke. And he paid for it.

The city of Izborsk before Rurik «took the whole volost alone» was in the possession of his brother Truvor. If Oleg was a participant in the events that led Rurik to the individual authority, this explains why he became a confidant of the prince – the breadwinner, the regent of the young Igor.

It is impossible to exclude the fact of family ties between Rurik and Polotsk prince Rogvold and Tur prince Turov. Their activities in comparison with the twists of events connected with the clan of Rurik's are less known, but not less significant for the history of the formation of nationhood in the Baltic states.

There are a number of interesting facts related with the reign of Rurik, the campaigns of Askold against Polotsk and wars with the Volga Bulgaria. They are set forth in the Nikon Chronicle. But now we will return to the questions which connected with the transfer of the capital from Novgorod to Kiev.

The centers of the dependent territories were «put» by Rurik cities. The state began to acquire real shape. Borders were strengthened. The prince's power became more solid. New cities were built. But in 879 Rurik died. After his death his son Igor I

became the Novgorod prince and the ruler of Rus.

So, Novgorod was the capital of Rus at the time of prince Igor I, son of Rurik. That's why there was a need for legitimation of the future prince through making him the head of Novgorod. This procedure passed Sviatoslav I Igorevich, Vladimir the Great and Yaroslav the Wise. Later this city will play an important role in the history of Rus as its Northern capital. That is why Ivan the Terrible tried, at whatever the cost, to capture Novgorod.

During the reign of Rurik, from the time of the death of his brothers and to the death of the founder of the Rurik dynasty, the capital of Rus was Novgorod. In the first period of the reign of Igor I Rurikovich, under the regency of Oleg the Prophet, Novgorod remained the capital for «Rus», in the understanding of the «Varangians». And subsequently Novgorod played the role of the Northern capital of the state. Novgorod princes traditionally became rulers of the whole state. Novgorod is the second capital of Rus.

The Third Capital of Rus

The death of konung Rurik, the first ruler of Rus, could mark not only the end of the dynasty, but also the disintegration of the state. During the Middle Ages all power was concentrated in the hands of the ruler and with it weakening the power could fall and be torn apart between his attendants and successors. Empires were arising and disintegrating instantly. And only if the ruler succeeded in creating a state system and appointing worthy men to senior positions, which put the interests of the state above their own, it was possible to preserve and develop state principles for decades and even centuries.

Considering that Igor still was a child, Oleg I became warden and in fact the Grand Duke (later he was known by term «Prophetic»). Prince Oleg, whose name translates as «holy» or «great,» has an

outstanding personality: commander, ruler, religious figure. His patron was the supreme god of the Scandinavians - Odin. At that time the capital of Rus was Novgorod. And from this city Oleg began his expansionist campaign against Kiev. It was Oleg who said the famous chronicle phrase: «Kiev is the mother of Rus' cities.»

A faithful ally in the beginnings of Oleg was the tribe of Krivichi and with them he captured the city of Smolensk in 882, where he «puts» his voivode. We do not confirm that at this time the capital was moved from Novgorod to Smolensk.

However, it should be noted that in fact the capital was where the ruler was. But during the reign of Rurik I and Oleg I, in Novgorod were already acting certain state institutions, and it was perceived by the population as the main city of Rus.

Afterwards, the prince, who claimed to become the ruler of Rus, at first became a prince of Novgorod. Novgorod princes were Svyatoslav, Vladimir and Yaroslav.

The lucky leader raised his authority in the eyes of the Varangian warriors: now he controlled the trade route «from the Varangians to the Greeks» in the upper part of the Dnieper.

Descriptions of the morals and customs of the Scandinavian high-placed families help us to suggest that in any case, there was a fight for the Grand Duke's place. Is it true or not, maybe will become known with the appearance of new sources. But in any case, the fight with the candidates for power ended with a victory of Oleg.

We do not have precise data on whether there were other candidates for Rurik's inheritance, except for Igor and Oleg. But even if they were, then Oleg chose for himself a successful and in fact win-win role of such a zealot and guardian of traditions, a protector of the rights of a minor successor to his father's throne.

Thus, in the first years of the regency Oleg managed to restrain the separatist intentions of the Varangian's voivode, as well as to subject to his authority significant territories that previously were only nominally controlled by the Varangians.

Under what circumstances did Kiev become the capital of Rus? Who became the first ruler of Kievan Rus?

How was the capital of Rus moved from Novgorod to Kiev? What does the phrase «Kiev is the mother of Rus' cities» mean?

Oleg confirmed his superiority in Rus and decided to strike Kiev, where Askold and Dir were ruling and did not want to obey his authority. Collecting the army from the subordinate tribes, Chudes, Slovenes, Maris, Ves and Krivichs, he goes in a campaign against Kiev, starting it from the Northern capital - Novgorod.

«In the year 6390 (882). Oleg went to the treck, taking with him many warriors: Varangians, Chudes, Slovenes, Maris, the Ves, Krivichs, and came to Smolensk with the Krivichs, and took power in the city, and put his man there. From there he went down, and took Liubech, and also put his man there.»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

Taking the city of Liubech, Oleg leaves there his voivode. The prince understood that it would not be easy to take possession of an armed Kiev, in which there is a strong Varangian troop. To achieve his goal, the military leader used strategy. Oleg leaved the main part of the troops behind with Varangians and came closer to Kiev.

«And they came to the mountains of Kiev, and Oleg enquired that Askold and Dir are the princes here. He hid some of the warriors in the boats, and others left behind, and he started carrying the baby Igor. And he swam to the Ugra mountain, hiding his warriors, and sent to Askold and Dir.»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

Arriving to the Kiev mountains, the konung orders them to stay in the ships and with a small part of his soldiers goes to the Ugrian boundaries (at the bottom of the Pechersky hill, "near the mountain"), from where he sends the staffette to Askold and Dir with the words:

«We are venturers and go to the Greeks from Oleg and Igor princes. Come to us, to your relatives.»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

When Askold and Dir, suspecting nothing, approached Oleg's ships, the Varangians jumped out of their hiding places, cutting off their way to retreat. Oleg did not want to tolerate opponents of his power, and said:

«You are neither princes nor princely family. I am the prince's family." Igor was taken out, then a child, and Oleg continued: "And this is the son of Rurik!»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

And the swords pierced the bodies of the Varangian voivodes.

The deprived of leader Norman troop of Kiev found meaningless to resist its counterparts from the North. It is not excluded that in the murder of Askold and Dir also took part their comrades-in-arms, who took the path of conspiracy with the more successful and authoritative konung Oleg.

So, his famous phrase the ruler of Eastern Europe spoke over the bodies of defeated opponents. Motivation and action were instant, decisive and convincing. Then followed the program of further activity and it was no less stunning.

Oleg I actually said: «We are putting an end to the last bandit life and starting to build a new state!»

In the Greek manner at the level of the characters the phrase sounded: «Kiev is the metropolis of Rus.» Metropolis is the mother of policies (cities). And here arise other versions:

Version one:

The prince proclaimed that from now on, from his arrival in the city, Kiev is the mother – the main city among the cities founded by Varangians.

Version two:

Oleg I stated that Kiev has already become a metropolis, that is, from it have

already detached the Varangian colony in the Dnieper region.

Version three:

The prince was surprised. He saw the territory on which the conglomerate of policies was located. And this conglomerate of Varangians is united into one city.

The fourth version:

The prophetic Varangian predicted that in the future Kiev would become the main city of Rus.

The murdered Askold and Dir were buried: Askold on the mountain, which later will be called «Ugric» (at the tomb of Askold the boyar Olma will build the church of St. Nicholas), and Dir behind the St. Orino. The researcher of the history of Kiev, S.I. Klimovsky, in his book «Where, When and Why Kiev arose,» analyzes in details the special aspects of urban processes on the Pechersk hills.

As we remember, Rome arose on seven hills. The fortress of Askold and Dir, as well as other colonies: settlements, monasteries, sanctuaries, became one of the «hills» on which Kyiv arose.

Archaeological finds confirm that during the reign of Svyatoslav, and even more so of his predecessors, Kiev was a small strengthened city, to which were adjoined several towns, communities, villages and farms. It is not logical to unite all colonies, remains of dugouts, treasures and a number of insignificant finds by the fictitious borders of a gigantic metropolis. Just as it is not logical constantly make more ancient the development of the city before finding the remains of the settlements of primitive people in the suburbs of the modern capital.

Subsequently, the ideologists of Moscow as the «third Rome» will pick up the idea of the "seven hills" and will argue that the capital of the Moscow kingdom also arose on seven hills. But in this case "not all hills created equal."

In the Kiev version we are talking about the hills of Andrew the Apostle, Kyi, Scheck, Khoryv, Askold, Dir and Oleg.

Andrew the Apostle is the Apostle of Jesus Christ that erected a cross on the mountain and proclaimed:

«Here will be a great city.»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

Oleg began to reign in Kiev, making it his capital. "This is the mother of Rus' cities" said the new prince, ascending to the throne of Kiev. Having Captured Kiev and the lands of Polanians, Oleg puts new cities-fortresses on the subjected territory.

Now Oleg relies on Varangians and Polanians, and on ex-allies – tribes of Slovenes, Kriviches and Maris – imposes tribute. Novgorod should have given the Varangians three hundred hryvnias a year «for peace.» This order existed until the death of the Great Prince of Kiev Yaroslav the Wise.

Thus, Kiev could not be the only or the first capital of the Varangian state, since Oleg won it. But it truly became the capital of Rus, firmly established on the Dnieper banks. The Varangian – Rus, on the lands that they conquered, built up old fortified cities, established administrative, trade and economic ties. The best men of Oleg became zealous servants of the strong centralizing policy of the Grand Dukes.

Moreover, in the territories that became the core of the Kiev state, hydronyms similar to the «Rus» root «Ros» were widespread. Ros, Rosava, Rosyanitsa, rosa and others contributed to the establishment of a new brand. The princes that came have organically joined the traditional relations between the Turkic and Slavic population of the forest-steppe of Ukraine.

At the same time, the Khazar Khaganate, weakened by wars with Arabs, could no longer actively fight for its political and economic interests in the Dnieper region. In fact, Slavs: Polanians, Northerners, Radimichs and Vyatichs were able not to depend on the power of the Khazar Khagans and emerge from the influence of Itil.

But let us return to the main theme of our study. It has already been determined who and under what circumstances pronounced the famous phrase «Kiev is the mother of Rus' cities», and its significance in the history of Eastern Europe. It is established that the Grand Duke moved the capital to the South and expanded the borders of the state

to the limits of those occupied by Slavs. We paid enough attention to the question of how the migration of Rus took place, as a result of the widening of the territory of the Rurik dynasty. The movement of the capital has been investigated. But still, there remains the question which connected with retransmission of the legendary phrase.

If you carefully read the lines of the chronicle, the phrase spoken by Oleg sounded rather different.

«Became Oleg the prince of Kiev. And he says «This will be the mother of Rus' cities»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

So, other cities, fortresses, settlements, founded or conquered by Varangians, Oleg proclaimed dependent and subordinate to Kiev. And this order has remained unchanged up to the present time. Kiev is the city that became the capital by order of Prince Prophetic Oleg.

The superiority of Kiev repeatedly was disputed by Novgorod and Suzdal, Chernigov and Tmutarakan, Moscow and St. Petersburg. But the sacral significance of Kiev, the center of Christianity, was determined at the time of its blessing by Andrew the Apostle. And as the center of the state of Rus – by Prophetic Oleg.

Kiev is the third capital of Rus. It became the capital of Rus with the arrival of Prince Oleg, who proclaimed it the main city of the state. In fact, here in our study, it's about time for an end. Ancient Rus has acquired borders. The city of Kiev was the capital of Rus. In Kiev, Rurik dynasty was established. It seems that everything has been adjusted and entered into the standard framework: the European dynasty is writing the history of its home. But it was far from it.

The Fourth Capital of Rus

In the history of Rus was short but brilliant period, thanks to which Rus became not just known throughout the medieval world, but thundered so that the echoes of events, which are

connected to the name of one of the first princes of Rus, are still heard.

Since 882, Rus has become the name of the Kiev state in the full sense of the word. We will not deepen into the interpretation of such concepts as state, people, ethnos, which in those old times did not completely coincide with modern definitions. Here we are considering questions which are related to the capital of Rus.

As we know, during the fragmentation, many cities could claim the status of the first city – the centers of specific principalities: Chernigov, Vladimir, Tmutarakan and Galich. But still, though for a short time, the mighty Ancient Rus, not yet infected by the virus of disunity and united into one state, had one more capital.

It was described above that the capital of Rus during the reign of Oleg I and Igor I was undoubtedly Kiev. But Kiev had somewhat different role during the reign of Igor's son - Svyatoslav I.

Were there any cities in the history of Rus that rivaled Kiev for the superiority?

Why and where did Svyatoslav I move the capital from Kiev?

Where was the capital of Rus during the reign of Prince Svyatoslav I?

Grand initiative of the Grand Duke Svyatoslav I led his interests directly face the interests of Byzantine emperors, who wanted to keep their primacy in the Black Sea region.

Prince Svyatoslav I conquered the Volga and Caspian lands, subjected to his own power Northern Caucasus and Crimea, annexed Pryazov and Black Sea steppes to Rus. And then he moved his troops beyond Danube. Following the great conquerors Attila and Asparuh, he tried to subject Pannonia and the Balkans to his authority. And it was grand prince Svyatoslav, who said:

«It is not pleasant for me to stay in Kiev.»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

When and under what circumstances was pronounced the phrase: "It is not pleasant for me to stay in Kiev"?

What did Svyatoslav mean by stating that Pereyaslavets became the center of his land?

Did the prince of Kiev have the right to lay claim to the territory of the Danube region?

Version one:

As a result of his upbringing, the prince-warrior did not feel his closeness with Kiev boyar elite. He was a Viking by his origin. Greed and thirst for adventure pushed him to conquer all new territories.

Version two:

The Varangian leader considered the territories of the Northern Black Sea area to be his own domain and strove maximally fixate in the Danube region in order to control the trade and economic potential of the European continent.

Version three:

The Grand Duke of Kiev continued the policy of his predecessors: the external vector, which was directed to expansion of the territories and fight against enemies, and the internal one to strengthen the trade and economic potential of state.

Whatever it was, Svyatoslav Igorevich made a series of campaigns against Balkans in the late 60's of the X century. At first he acted as an ally of Constantinople, but soon began his political game. In reply, the Emperor bribed Pechenegs.

In the spring of 968, while Svyatoslav I was in Pereyaslav, Pecheneg's horde came to Kiev, supposedly headed by the Khagan Kurya. By that time in the city was Princess Olga with her grandchildren: Yaropolk, Oleg and Vladimir. They were guarded by a small troop. Only thanks to the fact that the troop of the voivode of Pretich has come to Kiev, it was possible to raise the siege of the city. These events are described in legends and stories, steeped in romanticism.

After concluding peace agreement with Pretich, Kurya did not leave Kiev lands, but began to plunder the outskirts of the city and surrounding towns and villages. There was no one to oppose to Pechenegs. Then the people

of Kiev sent a staffette to Prince Svyatoslav with the words:

«You are, prince, looking for someone else's land and take care of it, but left yours. We were almost taken by Pechenegs, and your mother, and your children. If you do not come and will not defend us then they will finally take us. Or you do not have pity for your land, and the mother who has become old, and your children?»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

The chronicle phrase – a reproach to Svyatoslav by the Kiev people became the basis for the perception of the prince as a dashing conqueror who forgot about his land in search of glory and profit. But in reality everything was different.

Hearing the bad news, Svyatoslav I returned to Kiev with his troop, defeated the horde of Pechenegs, which was located near the city, and drove them to the steppe.

We'll emphasise «with his troop». The major part of the troops remained on Danube. Also allied detachments during this period probably left the occupied territory. And the allies of Rus in the war with Byzantium and Bulgaria were Torkils, Chorni Klobuky, Hungarians, and it is possible that also Pechenegs.

The phrase «The peace has come» is often used by the chronicler. But this was most likely not peace, but truce. Restless Rus' rulers did not imagine themselves without war.

So, the peace has come. But there was no peace in the soul of the prince. And Svyatoslav said:

«In the year 6477 (969). Svyatoslav said to his mother and his boyars: "It is not pleasant for me to stay in Kiev, I want to live in Pereyaslav on Danube because there is the middle of my land, all the benefits flow there: from the Greek land - gold, pavoloka, wines, various fruits, from the Czech Republic and from Hungary - silver and horses, from Rus - furs and wax, honey and slaves.»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

The prince calls his capital Pereyaslavets on the Danube. Pereyaslavets is the fourth capital of Rus.

«Olga answered him: «You see I'm sick; where do you want to go away from me?»», because she was already very ill. And she said: «When you bury me, go wherever you want.» After three days Olga died and her son, grandchildren all the people cried over her, and they carried her and buried in the chosen place, Olga settled not to make funeral feast, because she had a priest with her - he buried the blessed Olga.»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

Impressive coincidence which described in the chronicles, do not stop to surprise. Events seem to fit one another. Sequence is so irreproachable that you start to have doubts about their truthfulness. Actions, dialogues become illustrations to instructive biblical texts and hortatives.

The attack of Pechenegs – the arrival of Svyatoslav from the campaign – the reproach of the Kiev oligarchs to the prince – Olga's death – a new campaign against Balkans – the death of the prince.... How not think about all of it and do not look for catch.

What is the true reason for the return of the prince to Kiev? Why did Olga die suddenly?

Who called Pechenegs to Rus in the absence of the ruler? Who benefited the division of Rus between the sons of the prince?

It is difficult to give quick and convincing answers to these questions. But the discussion that took place in the palace of the Princess of the Equal-to-the-Apostles, confirms the fact that in the late 60's - early 70's Svyatoslav I considered Pereyaslavets on Danube as his capital.

Location of the capital

The capital of Rus from 968 till 971 years during the reign of Svyatoslav I was the city of Pereyaslavets on Danube – a strategically and economically important center. The Grand Duke in reasoning about the transfer of the capital to the South of the empire emphasized that the territory of Dnieper region is only a part of his land, and Kiev can no longer claim to be the first city of the empire. The prince's plans are much more global than ruling over the Eastern part of Europe. His goal is to firmly establish himself in the new capital on Danube, the main waterway of Europe. There is still a discussion about whether we can compare Pereyaslavets, Kievets, Dorostol and modern Silistra.

You can exalt or vice versa minimize the role of Svyatoslav in history. But in those times the ruler faced tasks, without the solution of which today we would hardly talk about the history of Rus.

Rus could «be long gone» as well as Byzantium, Khazaria and Volga Bulgaria. Perhaps the work of Svyatoslav mystically protected it from oblivion. And now three states are fighting for the right to be called its successors: Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian Federation.

It's funny that the Finno-Ugric territories, first colonized by the Slavs and then conquered by Varangians, compete in the right to primacy with the Turkic regions that mastered Slavic grammar and language. But let us not dig deep into the mysterious intricacies of philology and genetics.

«What is «Kievskia Rus»? For most of the people this is a huge and powerful medieval state, stretching from the banks of Black Sea to the misty and cold great lands of Baltic, from the Carpathian Mountains to Volga-Oka interfluve. And in common consciousness, and in historical literature, the term «Kievskia Rus» is so firmly rooted that its artificiality and anachronism are almost not realized. Meanwhile, a state called «Kievskia Rus» (and even «Ancient Rus») has never existed!»

A.P. Tolochko «Chimera of Kievskia Rus»

Most likely, this shaky education, which A.P. Tolochko called a chimera, would have disintegrated before it took shape of real European state. But the activities of Svyatoslav led to the fact that with Rus and its rulers – descendants of the prince, were considered on the world stage for a long time.

After the death of Princess Olga, in 970 Svyatoslav I carried out one more campaign against Balkans. Thus, we are confident about two campaigns of Svyatoslav against Bulgaria.

The second campaign is notable for the fact that Svyatoslav actually returned to the territories which already subjected to him, but at that time his ally Byzantine Empire began completely different game and openly opposed Rus.

So, let's remind that at the beginning of military operations the goddess Glory or Victoria (Victory) was on the side of the great Kiev prince. The Rus army, with the support of numerous allies, prevailed the enemy. The allies of Rus in the war against Byzantium and Bulgaria were Torkils, Chorni Klobuky, Hungarians and also Pechenegs. Svyatoslav annexed the territory of Danube Bulgaria to Rus.

Using opportunity of the absence of Svyatoslav in Kiev, the horde of the Pecheneg Khagan Kuri came to the capital. Svyatoslav was forced to return home. At that time Bulgarians, with the support of Byzantium, forced out the Rus people's military stations from Danube fortresses and only thanks to the incredible efforts and organizational talent of the prince, was possible to regain control of the Danube fortresses and then occupy the entire territory of Bulgaria.

Thus, Svyatoslav, not with words but with decisive actions, proved that the fourth capital of Rus is Pereyaslavets on Danube.

Where exactly was the capital of Rus at the end of the reign of Svyatoslav?

What modern locations can be identified with Pereyaslavets?

Version one:

The identification of Pereyaslavets – the capital of the state of Svyatoslav with the capital of Bulgarian kingdom, Veliki Preslav, is

pretty much explained. The prince conquered the territory of Bulgaria and could make its main city as his residence.

Version two:

Svyatoslav's headquarters were located in one of the fortified towns on Danube. This role is claimed by a number of Bulgarian and Romanian localities. Including Romanian village of Nufara, which was in ancient times called Preslav. In the sources there is a mention of 80 fortresses on Danube, each of them could be Kievets or Pereyaslavets.

Version three:

A number of scientists identify Pereyaslavets with Dorostol. It is indisputable that Dorostol had a great value in the times of the Roman and Byzantine empires. He played no less important role in the times of Bulgarian kingdom as patriarchal headquarter and advanced post on Danube.

Speaking of Dorostol as the most probable capital of Svyatoslav, we see a huge number of connecting threads between the history of Rus and this Danube city. Beginning from the clashes of the Scythian-Sarmatian troops with the Romans in the fight for Danube lands, moving part of the population from the Old Great Bulgaria which located in the Northern Black Sea Coast behind Danube, the migration from Danube to Dnieper region of the first princes, with Kyi as head and many other coincidences.

So, famous Roman general Aetius was from Silistra, the winner of the Hun (Protobulgarian) Attila's leader in the Catalan fields. For a while the headquarters of the Bulgarian patriarch was located here.

The failure of the first version is settled by the fact that in addition to the desire of the local population, there are no convincing facts for transferring the palm of victory over other cities to this or that village.

The second version also can not be dominant due to a contradiction with the logic of actions of Prince Svyatoslav. The ruler did not simply subject these or other states and destroyed their rulers and nobles. Svyatoslav I created an empire parts of which kept certain attributes of independence.

The state of Svyatoslav was built following the example of Hun Empire, in which, for example the king was ready to

remain a ruler over his nation. Similarly, the Tsar of Bulgaria, Boris II, retained all the attributes of royal power. And in Veliki Preslav there was military post of Rus people, with commander Sveneld as voivode.

The third version is the most believable. Pereyaslavets (Dorostol, Kievets, Silistra) – the city since ancient times had a great strategic importance in Dobruja. The one who owned Dorostol controlled the entire lower course of Danube, and accordingly, trade flows to and from Europe. That is to what Svyatoslav strove in the same way as his ancestors.

And the fact of the fury with which Svyatoslav defended Dorostol in 972 during the attack of Emperor John I Tzimiskes on Bulgaria, indicates that Dorostol was the main city of the Svyatoslav's Empire.

The remains of powerful fortifications have preserved to the present days. Here Rus people and Bulgarian people kept the last defense during the invasion of Byzantine army. Byzantium occupied Bulgaria after the fall of Dorostol.

In Dorostol there was headquarter of Svyatoslav. In other cities of Bulgaria were military posts of the Rus people. The largest, as mentioned above, in the Great Preslav. They were led by the voivode Sveneld. After a violent defense, the voivode retracted to Dorostol to the main forces of Russ people, «under wing» of Svyatoslav.

The circle has been closed. Attila «put in motion numerous nations» and as a result – the collapse of the Roman Empire. After the collapse of the Hunnic Empire, Slavic troops begin their expansion from Danube into North-Eastern Europe. Prince Kyi, during the early Middle Ages, reigned in Kievets on Danube. And Svyatoslav moved the capital of Rus to Danube...

But this is the subject of another historical expedition, here we can claim that during the reign of Svyatoslav I, Rus got its fourth capital – Pereyaslavets, in ancient times Byzantine Dorostol, and nowadays - Silistra.

It was Pereyaslavets on the Danube that became the fourth capital of Ancient Rus.

Why Pereyaslavets was the capital of Rus for such a short time?

How did Kiev become the capital of the state again?

This page of history is dramatic both for Rus and for Bulgaria. In connection with the geopolitical situation, Rurik as the ruling dynasty of Rus did not manage to fixate in the Balkans, and most of the Bulgarian kingdom was conquered by the Byzantines.

In fact, Svyatoslav I brought a devastating blow to the First Bulgarian Kingdom, in the territory of which battle actions began. After the invasion, Svyatoslav left the nominal power in the hands of Bulgarian Tsar Boris II. Bulgaria, as well as Khazaria and Volga Bulgaria, became a part of the Svyatoslav's Empire. But Svyatoslav did not manage to keep such vast territories in his hands.

The Byzantine emperor, taking advantage of the situation, began expansion into Bulgaria, which ended with the defeat of the state of Bulgarians, whose peak of power was during the reign of Simeon I the Great.

Then the events developed no less rapidly. The empire of Svyatoslav I fell apart. Some of the territories were freed from vassalage (Volga Bulgaria), others were conquered (Danube Bulgaria), others were divided between descendants of the ruler. So the capital of the oldest son Yaropolk I became the city of Kiev, the middle Oleg II - Ovruch, the youngest Vladimir I ruled in Novgorod.

There is an opinion that the treks of Svyatoslav I were the last attempts of the rulers of Rus to push the borders of the state to the South. This is not quite so. Vladimir I as well as his ancestors made a series of campaigns against Danube and Crimea. And later, during the reign of the sons of Vladimir I, under Yaroslav I the Wise, Rus was divided into two parts. The ruler of the first, Western, with the capitals – Kiev and Novgorod – became Yaroslav the Wise. The second, Eastern, with the capitals – Tmutorakan and Chernigov – was ruled by his brother Mstislav I. And if Yaroslav I is more famous for his diplomatic and legal achievements, then Mstislav I, in turn, became famous for his victories in the Caucasus.

Svyatoslav was not destined to return to Danube. Autumn caught him on Dnieper in

front of the rapids. Here the old enemy was already waiting for him – Khagan Kurya along with his army. And the prince retreated at the outfall of Dnieper. On the White Coast he spent the winter. Coldness, disease and hunger plagued the army of Rus people.

In the spring, a part of the army returned to Kiev on horseback with the commander Svenel as voivode. The prince with the main part on boats, laden with tribute, paid by the Byzantines, along with the wounded and sick, rose to the rapids. Here in a fierce battle, the whole army fallen with its brave prince. Scientists and local historians still dispute about the place of battle. To this topic will be dedicated another study.

But how not to talk about the amazing discovery which was made during the construction of the Dnieper Hydroelectric Station in the early twentieth century on the banks of Dnieper. We talk about a silver eagle from the Voznesensky treasure which was found on the territory of Zaporizhia. Scientists divided in the identification of this artifact. Some believe that it was under power of the son of Kubrat I the Great – Asparuh, the founder of the Bulgarian kingdom on Danube, who supposedly died in the battle with the Khazars near Zaporizhia, stopping their advance to the West. Others argue that this is an item from the grave of Svyatoslav, buried on the Voznesensky Hill.

Paradoxically, but both are right. After the capture of Great Preslav, Byzantine emperor John I Tzimiskes sent most of the treasures of Bulgarian kings to Constantinople. Part of the wealth was paid as tribute to Svyatoslav.

Among other items there was the silver eagle, holding in its paws a snake, from Byzantine standart – a symbol of Asparuh's victory over Byzantine army. Together with other treasures, it became the spoil of Pechenegs after defeat of army of Rus people.

Of course, steppe warriors did not bury their enemies with honors. The corpses of defeated in battle became food for huge catfishes who living in the Dnieper backwater. About these huge monsters tell local historians in their works. From the skull of the defeated knight the khagan Kurya ordered to make a cup and bragged with it at feasts.

And the high-placed Pecheneg warriors were buried at the highest point in the vicinity. Together with them, were put gifts for the Gods who granted victory over such a powerful and hateful opponent. All items including the silver eagle did melt in the funeral pyre. The second time the eagle was exposed to fire during the Great Patriotic War – a troop train with museum values was destroyed by German bombers. But, like they say, this is another story and it will be told in the next study.

Rus, after Svyatoslav's death, continued to remain an important player in the geopolitical field of Europe and a leader among the states of Northern Black Sea region, which was considered and respected by the rulers of the Byzantine Empire and the Holy Roman Empire, the Arabian Caliphate and Volga Bulgaria. But it was unable to achieve the power like in old times not with sons or with grandchildren of Svyatoslav who started fratricidal wars, which first led to the weakening of Kiev, then to the loss of territories, and later to the loss of independence.

The capital of Rus, its spiritual, cultural, economical and political center again becomes Kiev. And its rulers have tried many times to repeat heroic deeds of their glorious forefather – Svyatoslav I. So his son Vladimir I the Great tried to capture Danube Bulgaria and Volga Bulgaria, but left an ambitious plan after realizing that economical potential of Rus is not sufficient for this.

Later Vladimir-Suzdal princes repeatedly crossed their swords with the Bulgarians. And in the end, and Volga Bulgaria and Rus were conquered by the Chingissid's troops.

Svyatoslav's grandson – Mstislav I Udaloy, who divided Rus with his brother Yaroslav the Wise on Dnieper River, conducted rather successful policy in the Caucasus. But in time these lands were in the orbit of the influence of stronger states.

Union between Polovtsians and Danube Bulgarians enabled them to consolidate in Balkans and to be quite successful in the fight against Byzantine, could not stand against the stronger enemy – Turks. Thus, the great empires of the Middle Ages gradually faded into oblivion and new states replaced them. Everything has its beginning and its end. And our narration is also coming to an end.

Conclusion

Since ancient times, the concept of «Rus» has become indispensable in the vocabulary of Eastern European peoples. It was understood not only as Varangians-Vikings, but also the local Finno-Ugric and Slavic population who recognized the power of the conquerors. On the territory of Eastern Europe, Rurik dynasty was no longer perceived as foreign. Although the term «Varangians» still continues to denote foreign, visiting conquerors.

The Varangians-Rus advancing from the North to the South seized new territories. There was not enough room for them in the former capital. Thus, one by one, the towns which were located on the way «from the Varangian to the Greeks» received the status of the main city (metropolis) of Rus.

And in that regard if we speak about the formation of the state of Rus, there are four stages:

Stage I – Ladoga Rus (from 862 till 864).

«And they first came to the Slovens, and they set the city of Ladoga».

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

Stage II – Novgorod Rus (from 864 till 882).

«And coming to the Lake Ilmen, he set the city above Volkhov. And he called it Novgorod. And he sat down to reign here.»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

Stage III – Kievan Rus (from 882 till 967).

«Oleg sat down to reign in Kiev, and Oleg said: "This will be the mother of Rus' cities."»

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

Stage IV – Pereyaslav Rus (from 967 till 971).

«It is not pleasant for me to stay in Kiev, I want to live in Pereyaslav on the Danube because there is the middle of my land».

The Tale of Bygone Years by Nestor the Chronicler

Although other concepts of the periodization of the history of Ancient Rus are not unfounded, for example: Rurik's Rus, Oleg's Rus, Igor's Rus, etc.

After the death of Svyatoslav, Kiev, in fact, once again becomes headquarter of commander-in-chief, ruler and sovereign – the capital city of Rus.

And despite all ups and downs of history and fratricidal wars, Kiev for a long time remained the capital of Rus as a super-ethnic and supranational association of the Eastern Slavs, thereby confirming the famous chronicle phrase: «Kiev is the mother of Rus' cities»

Of course, this historical study will not put an end to the centuries-old controversy surrounding every event connected with the appearance on the international political arena of the state of Rus, and then its successors. Rather it will be periods of ellipsis. But we had no such task. The goal of this little research was the idea of trying to take a slightly different look at the ancient history of Dnieper region, ask questions and start to search for answers. In the search for truth, lies the truth itself.

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