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The First Christian Rus' Generation: Contextualizing the Black Sea Events of 1016, 1024 and 1043

Меняющийся характер взаимоотношений между Византией и Русью в последние годы X в., начиная с крещения князя Владимира и далее в течение XI в., уже привлек внимание многих ученых. В частности, три встречи между силами христианской Византии и недавно обращенной в христианство Руси, состоявшихся в первой половине XI в. (в 1016, 1024 и 1043 гг.) могут послужить иллюстрацией изменения динамики этих отношений по обе стороны Чёрного моря.

В прошедшие десятилетия внимание ученых было сосредоточено в основном на том, что в результате этих трех событий эта динамика выражается как переход от модели борьбы между язычеством и христианством к более тонкой парадигме христианской междоусобицы.

Принимая во внимание, что по мнению многих историков этот период рассматривается как период развивающегося и объединяющегося «государства Русь», оценивая события этих трех встреч Руси и Византии, представленная статья направлена на то, чтобы привлечь внимание к тому, что «государство» Русь, которым управлял Ярослав Мудрый, не было так унифицировано или монолитно, как предполагалось ранее.

Ключевые слова: Киевская Русь, Ярослав Мудрый, византийская история, черноморская история, одиннадцатый век, крещение Руси, военноморская война, православное христианство.

Traditionally, much scholarship assumes Rus' and Byzantium as different “states”, which clashed at certain times in the 11th century (such as in 1043), albeit sharing imperial Orthodoxy, without further clarification into the political and administrative structure of imperial Orthodoxy. Certain strains of scholarship have emphasized various traits distinctive to specifically one “state” or the other. Still other scholarship focuses on one or another encounter between Byzantium and the newly Christianized Rus' in the sources (such as in 1016 or 1024), without necessarily contextualizing them together.

Therefore, I will attempt to contextualize these events of 1016, 1024 and 1043 together, as recounted from a disparate array of specifically Christian sources, written in both Greek and Slavonic, in light of the larger processes taking place further away from the Black Sea proper. What caused the largely naval wars of 1016, 1024 and 1043 which involved commanders and rulers of Rus' and Byzantium? Have modern interpretations of these events done justice to them? I will argue that these three conflicts, while superficially incomparable, in that one was ostensibly a cooperation between Rus' and Byzantium (1016) and the other two were conflicts (1024 and 1043), were truly more of a continuity from previous Rus'-Byzantine wars to secure profitable concessions and booty from Byzantine emperors. In this light, it is worth remembering that Christianity was as yet hardly established in Kiev, and that the first generation of nominally Christian rulers after the baptism of Vladimir in 988-989 still bore pre-Christian traditions. Therefore, I believe these three events can be considered together vis-à-vis the particular circumstances of the first Christian Rus' generation, instead of imagining some sort of Rus' "state" foreign policy.

The first event, taking place in the year 1016, is mentioned exclusively in the histories of Geōrgios Kedrēnos (Kedrenos, George 1839: 464) and Iōannēs Skylitzēs (Skylitzes Ioannis 2010: 336), who refer to a joint expedition between the forces of Mstislav of Tmutarakan' and Basil II in the area of the eastern Crimea and the Taman' peninsulas, or more succinctly, the Straits of Kerč. This expedition is described as a joint Byzantine-Rus' conquest of "Chazaria" and the archon Geōrgios Tzoulas in these two sources (Артамонов 1962: 440-441; Гадлю 1991: 5-7; Майко 2006: 217-224; Feldman, 2013: 32, n77; Соколова 1971: 68; and Степаненко 1992: 125)¹.

¹ Notably, however, there is no reference to this campaign in the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* (ПСРЛ. Т. 1: 141-142; The Russian Primary Chronicle 1953: 131-132). Apparently, Jaroslav was concurrently preoccupied struggling against his half-brother Svyatopolk.

Additionally, it should be noted that as far back as Svjatoslav's campaign against Petar in 967-971², the area of Tmutarakan' on the Straits of Kerč, (the so-called "Kimmerian Bosporos") between the eastern Crimea and Taman was deemed by Leōn Diakonos to be Svjatoslav's "own territory" (Diakonos, Leon 1828: 103; Diakonos, Leon 2005: 153). That the areas around the Straits of Kerč were synchronously regarded as Khazaria, and for many years to come (Noonan 1998-1999: 207-230), should come as little surprise then for the events which took place, allegedly, in the year 1016. Aside from Vladimir's campaign against Crimean Chersōn in 987-989, (Carter 2003: 181; Feldman 2013: 42, n117) these events have been usually interpreted as joint operations between Rus' and Byzantium, and the initiation of the recently Christianized cooperation of the rulers of Rus' with the empire (Vasiliev 1936: 134; Аргамонов 1962: 437; Соколова 1971: 68-74; Ромашов 2005: 144-146; Литаврин 1967: 347-353; Гадло 1990: 22-27; Брюсова 1972: 51)³.

² The warfare involving emperor Iōannēs Tzimiskēs, Petar and Svjatoslav in the Lower Danube region in 967-971 has attracted considerable scholarship in its own right (Zhivkov 2015: 236; Kaldellis 2013: 35-52; Fine 1991: 181-182; Stephenson 2000: 48-55; Curta 2006: 237-240; Franklin, Shepard 1996: 145-151; Obolensky 1971: 128-130).

³ For example, Vasiliev makes the following remarks, which have been largely accepted by subsequent scholarship: "The friendly relations established between the Empire and the Russian principality after Vladimir's marriage to the Byzantine Princess and his conversion to Christianity led to the fact that in 1016 the two states were acting in Crimea in common in order definitely to reestablish Byzantine authority there. Although the Khazar state had been crushed by the Russians in the sixties of the tenth century, some groups of Khazars evidently still remained in Crimea and at times raided the Byzantine regions there. According to a Byzantine chronicler of the eleventh and twelfth centuries [Kedrēnos], in 1016 Emperor Basil II sent to Khazaria a fleet under the command of Mongus, son of Andronicus, and with the aid of Sfengus, Vladimir's brother, conquered the country; its ruler George Tsulus was taken prisoner in the first battle. This expedition sailed no doubt to the Crimea, since Khazaria or Gazaria was the name given to the Crimea in the Middle Ages because of the former Khazar predominance there. This was an attempt of the Byzantine government to do away with the remnants of the Khazars who were hostile to the Imperial interests in the Crimea. It was brilliantly successful, and from 1016 on the Byzantine power in the Peninsula was completely restored as far east as Bosporus and Kerch, where

Nevertheless, Skylitzēs (Skylitzes Ioannis 1973: 354 [16:39]⁴) briefly records an imperial operation against a local Crimean ruler commanded by a Rus' captain in 1016. In Wortley's translation (Skylitzes Ioannis 2010: 336):

“The emperor returned to Constantinople in January, AM 6524 [CE 1016], and sent a fleet against Chazaria under the command of Mongos, the brother of Vladimir and brother-in-law of the emperor, he subdued the region and actually captured its governor, George Tzoulas, in the first engagement”.

However, it is clear that our primary textual source is rather slim on details and therefore, it has been left to the students of material culture to supply their own interpretations of the sigillography primarily.

in the eleventh century, according to a seal, the *protospatharius* and *strategos* of Bosphorus, Arcadius, was a governor appointed by the Emperor”.

⁴ This is the passage in Skylitzēs' text: “Ο δὲ βασιλεὺς ἀπελθὼν ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει, κατὰ τὸν Ἰαννουάριον μῆνα τοῦ ἑξακισχλιοστοῦ πεντακοσιοστοῦ εικοστοῦ τετάρτου ἔτους, στόλον εἰς Χαζαρίαν ἐπέμπει, ἔξωρχον ἔχοντα τὸν Μογγόν, υἱὸν Ἀνδρονίκου δουκὸς τοῦ Λυδοῦ· καὶ τῇ συνεργίᾳ Σφέγγου τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ Βλαδιμηροῦ, τοῦ γαμβροῦ τοῦ βασιλέως, ὑπέταξε τὴν χώραν, τοῦ ἄρχοντος αὐτῆς Γεωργίου τοῦ Τζούλη ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ προσβολῇ συλληφθέντος”.

As for Kedrēnos' text, it largely matches that of Skylitzēs account of the affair, though Skylitzēs' narrative includes the date fully spelled out (ἑξακισχλιοστοῦ πεντακοσιοστοῦ εικοστοῦ τετάρτου), while Kedrēnos abbreviates it (σφκδ') and he also omits Sphengos as a brother-in-law of the emperor, leaving Sphengos as simply a brother (τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ τοῦ βασιλέως) (Kedrenos, George 1839: 464). We may also note that Wortley translates the word ἄρχον as “governor” and the word χώραν as “region,” even though alternatively it would usually be “land,” “country,” or in the context of contemporary reference to Crimea, as “climata,” per the common usage in Latin. For example, in the 6th-c. *Synekdēmos of Ieroklēs* (Synekdemnos, Ierokles 1866: 140-141), which lists all concurrent areas subject to the Constantinopolitan patriarch, the Latin translation of such areas, including Crimea and even Khazaria in fact, references “climata”, as opposed to the usage of words such as ἀρχοντεία or ἐπαρχία.

In this regard, it would be important to note that Skylitzēs' use of the word χώραν is not technical, which, according to prof. Archie Dunn (personal communication, 24 January, 2017), indicates the perception that this “region” was not a formal province of the empire, as distinct from contemporary Chersōn, even though the two are associated by other sources discussed below.

The sigillographer Jean-Claude Cheynet believes that due to his seals, Geōrgios Tzoulas was of Khazar origin, though he declines to give specifics about how exactly the seals prove this, aside from merely stating, like Skylitzēs, that he was the *archon* of Khazaria, though also the *stratēgos* of Chersōn (Cheynet 1996: 35-36), which is significant in its own right. The Tzoulas family, judging by the broad extent of their seals, seems to have occupied a prominent place in local Crimean politics (Соколова 1971: 68-74; Алексеенко 2000: 256-266; Feldman 2018: 202-218). However, to ascertain whether or not this Geōrgios Tzoulas identified as “Khazarian” may be ultimately unprovable, since due to the alleged 9th-century Khazarian conversion to Judaism, with a name such as Geōrgios, the assumption that he was Jewish, while not entirely doubtful, would be nevertheless unlikely⁵. The local *prōtevōntes*, along with imperially appointed *stratēgoi* and even *prōtospatharioi*, of Chersōn and the *Klimata* in general, were frequently the same individuals and moreover, frequently constituted rebellious thorns in the sides of the Constantinopolitan emperors in the late 10th century. In this context, we can view Vladimir I’s campaign against Chersōn, less than 30 years prior to 1016, as not so much an act of defiance against Constantinople as it was an act on behalf of Constantinople to subdue recalcitrant subjects (Feldman 2013). While it is impossible to say for a fact that this campaign (987-989) was meant as an accommodating alternative to his predecessors’ earlier 9-10th-c. campaigns (Зимин 1973: 51), in the vein of Olga’s efforts to garner favorable treatment (Franklin, Shepard 1996: 136; Poppe 1992: 76), and primarily to secure lucrative trade agreements (Noonan 1987: 387-398), it seems that when contextualized with a cooperative engagement in 1016, this was precisely the result (Anokhin 1980: 102-122; Shepard 2006: 30-34). As for the mention of allegedly clearing the last remains of “Khazaria” in Crimea, this could simply be a reference to a local, autonomous *archon* from a prominent Crimean family, a Tzoulas.

⁵ Contrary, for example to Kevin Brook (Brook 2006: 155), who seems to accept Skylitzēs’ identification of Tzoulas as “the last Khazar kagan”.

That said, we must remember that Skylitzēs is the only source that mentions this event. Mstislav “of Tmutarakan”, never actually appears in this source and there is no definitive proof that he took part⁶, save for the assumption that he was simultaneously in Tmutarakan’ due to his assignment there by his father, Vladimir⁷. More to the point, because this obscure event in the year 1016 is only mentioned in one source, it cannot be trusted to bear the weight of much scholarly postulation.

The same can be said for another episode mentioned exclusively by Skylitzēs, dating to 1024, when a squadron of Rus’ allegedly attacked imperial positions south of Constantinople (Skylitzes Ioannis 1973: 368 [16:46]⁸). In Wortley’s translation (Skylitzes Ioannis 2010: 347):

⁶ Mstislav’s epithet is alluded to as such in the *PVL* as “Мѣстиславъ усъ/сущю Тѣмугорокана” (ПСРЛ. Т. 1: 146-147; The Russian Primary Chronicle 1953: 119, 250 n103). Franklin and Shepard (Franklin, Shepard 1996: 200) relate Mstislav to the event without actually positing that he took part in it:

“The Byzantine historian John Skylitzes tells of a certain Sphengos, prince of the Rus, who cooperated with a Byzantine naval expedition against ‘Khazaria’ in 1016. ‘Sphengos’ is probably a Greek enunciation of a Scandinavian name such as Svein or Sveinki. At around the same time Mstislav himself is reported to have subjugated the Kasogians (the Adyge of the Kuban region and northern Caucasus)”.

⁷ This connection has resulted in a puzzling association which has successfully tempted many historians. See for example discussions and conjectures given by Vernadsky (Vernadsky 1948: 75 n9), Gadlo (Гадло 1990: 22, 26) and Stepanenko (Степаненко 1992: 126, 129). It may be noted that Stepanenko (Степаненко 1992: 126-129; Степаненко 2008: 29) repeatedly disputes the sigillographer Sokolova (Соколова 1971: 68-74), who argues, convincingly I believe, that it would not be inconceivable to connect the many seals found in Crimea, referencing a certain George Tzoulas, to an actual person, and perhaps to the very individual referred to by Skylitzēs. For examples of the seal itself, see Alekseienko (Alekseienko 2012, cat. no. 1) and Sokolova (Соколова 1983: cat. nos. 54, 54a), which refers specifically to the Crimean center of Chersōn, as opposed to any other urban center in Crimea at the time, and to Tzoulas himself as both a *prōtospatharios* and *stratēgos* of Chersōn.

⁸ This is the passage in Skylitzēs’ text:

“Καὶ Ἄννης δὲ τῆς τοῦ βασιλέως ἀδελφῆς ἐν Ῥωσίᾳ ἀποθανούσης, καὶ πρὸ αὐτῆς τοῦ ἀνδρὸς αὐτῆς Βλαδιμηροῦ, Χρυσόχειρ τις συγγενῆς ὦν τοῦ τελευτήσαντος, ἄνδρας ὀκτακοσίους προσεταιρισάμενος καὶ πλοίοις ἐμβιβάσας, ἦλθεν εἰς Κωνσταντινούπολιν ὡς τάχα μισθοφορήσων, τοῦ δὲ βασιλέως

“Anna, the emperor’s sister, died in Russia, predeceased by Vladimir, her husband. Then a man named Chrysocheir, a relative of his, embarked a company of eight hundred men and came to Constantinople, ostensibly to serve as mercenaries. The emperor ordered him to lay down his arms and then he would receive him but [the Russian] was unwilling to do this and sailed through the Propontis. When he came to Abydos he gave battle to the commander there whose duty was to protect the shores and easily defeated him. He passed on to Lemnos where, beguiled by offers of peace, they were all slaughtered by the navy of the Kibyrrhaiote [theme], the commander of Samos, David of Ochrid, and the *duke* of Thessalonike, Nikephoros Kabasilas”.

Wortley claims in a corresponding footnote that “this episode reveals how the Varangian guard was replenished.” While this supposition seems fair, due to this episode’s appearance in this source alone, I would be cautious to assign too much weight to any given theory, such as that of Blöndal and Benedikz (Blöndal, Benedikz 1978: 50), for example, who propose that the name of the Rus’ leader itself, Chrysocheir, could be read as Eadmund, and therefore tie “English noblemen” to Kiev as early as the first quarter of the 11th century. However, it may be helpful to recall that the recruitment of generalized Varangian mercenaries was quite a widespread phenomenon fairly soon after Vladimir’s baptism, both among the Rus’ and for the emperors, and in the context of the battles for succession between the sons of Vladimir (the Vladimiroviči), as stipulated by Franklin and Shepard (Franklin, Shepard 1996: 202-203), even in the first decades of Jaroslav’s reign, the Rus’ hardly presented a united front.

Consequently, we may continue on to the Byzantine-Rus’ war of 1043. The event, far better documented than the last two, can be found in four main sources of the 11th century. The sources, whose

καταθεῖναι τὰ ὄπλα κελεύσαντος, καὶ οὕτω ποιήσασθαι τὴν ἐντυχίαν, μὴ θελήσας διῆλθε τὴν Προποντίδα. ἐν Ἀβύδῳ δὲ γενόμενος καὶ τῶ στρατηγοῦντι ταύτης συρράξας ὑπερμαχοῦντι τῶν παραλίων, καὶ τοῦτον ῥαδίως τρεψάμενος, κατήλθεν εἰς Λήμνον. ἐκεῖσε δὲ παρὰ τοῦ στόλου τῶν Κιβυρραιωτῶν, καὶ Δαβίδ τοῦ ἀπὸ Ἀχριδῶν στρατηγοῦντος Σάμου, καὶ Νικηφόρου τοῦ Καβάσιλα, δουκὸς ὄντος Θεσσαλονίκης, παρασπονδηθέντες ἅπαντες ἀπεσφάγησαν”.

original excerpts pertaining to the event are provided in the accompanying footnotes, include the *Chronographia* of Michaēl Psellos (who claimed to be an eyewitness), the *History* of Michaēl Attaleiatēs, the *Synopsis* of Skylitzēs and the *Povest' Vremennĭkh Let (PVL)*. While there is a broad consensus between the three Byzantine accounts, only Skylitzēs gives a detailed description of the primary cause of the war whereas Psellos left a somewhat exaggerated account of its cause. Regardless, the story can be summarized as a final, unsuccessful naval raid against Constantinople in 1043, instigated by some resolution involving prince Jaroslav Vladimirovič of Kiev (in the *PVL*), and his eldest son, Vladimir Jaroslavič of Novgorod (in Skylitzēs), which eventually ended in disaster for the Rus' by all accounts. According to Skylitzēs, the provocation was “a dispute with some Scyth merchants (Rus') at Byzantium; the matter escalated out of hand and an illustrious Scyth was killed” (Skylitzes Ioannis 2010: 404-405). By July, Vladimir Jaroslavič had arrived with a considerable force, although the sources disagree on the precise size. According to Skylitzēs, the Rus' numbered 100 000, whereas according to Attaleiatēs, they numbered “no fewer than 400 ships” (Attaleiates, Michael 2012: 33), finally, according to Psellos, the Rus' ships, or *monoxylōi*, were simply “almost too numerous to count” (Fourteen Byzantine Rulers 1966: 199). Nevertheless, Constantine IX Monomachos, the reigning emperor, hastily assembled an imperial navy and met the Rus' fleet in the Black Sea at an anchorage named Faros according to Skylitzēs, while Psellos and also Attaleiatēs insist that the battle took place, as in the Byzantine-Rus' battle of 1024, in the Sea of Marmara. After a considerable delay, Vladimir demanded of the emperor an absurd demand: three pounds of gold per head in his force according to Skylitzēs, or a thousand staters per ship according to Psellos. In response, according to Skylitzēs, the rest of whose account is summarized below, the emperor called his *magistros* Basil Theodorokanos to skirmish (ἀκροβολιζόμενος) against the Rus' with a smaller detachment, which proved successful. When the emperor approached with the main fleet, the Rus' withdrew, their ships wrecked against reefs and rock outcroppings in choppy seas,

thereby allowing the emperor to return to Constantinople. After a further battle in which the Rus' cornered the Romans in the anchorage, many on both sides were lost on both land and sea, though the Rus' did not have enough men to make for a successful expedition anymore, therefore they fled northward by land and sea and many were lost to the Black Sea storms. In short, the attacking Rus' were obliterated by Greek fire wielded by a stronger, if slightly outdated, imperial fleet off the shore somewhere not far from the "mouth of the Black Sea" (τοῦ Πόντου στόμα).

Firstly, in the *Chronographia* of Michaēl Psellos, who wrote as an eyewitness, the author depicts the cause of the war as based on simply a "barbarian nation [with] an insane hatred for the Roman Empire" and dismissing the various pretexts and justifications in his writing (Fourteen Byzantine Rulers 1966: 199-201⁹):

"This barbarian nation had consistently cherished an insane hatred for the Roman Empire, and on every possible occasion, first on one imaginary pretext, then on another, they waged war against

⁹ This is the passage in Psellos' text as rendered by K. Sathas (Psellos, Michael 1899: 129-130):

“Τὸ βάρβαρον τοιγαροῦν τοῦτο φύλον ἐπὶ τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίαν τὸν πάντα χρόνον λυττᾶ τε καὶ μέμηνε, καὶ ἐφ' ἑκάστῳ τῶν καιρῶν τοῦτο ἢ ἐκεῖνο εἰς αἰτίαν πλατ τόμενοι, πρόφασιν καθ' ἡμῶν πολέμου πεποιήνται· καὶ ἐπειδὴ ἐτεθνήκει μὲν ὁ καταδειματῶν τούτους αὐτοκράτωρ Βασιλεῖος, καὶ ἐπ' ἐκείνῳ ὁ ἀδελφὸς Κωνσταντῖνος τὸ λαχὸν αὐτῷ τοῦ αἰῶνος μέρος πεπλήρωκε, ᾧ τὸ εὐγενὲς κράτος ἀπεληλύθει, ἀνανεοῦνται αὐτῆς καθ' ἡμῶν τὸ παλαιὸν μῖσος καὶ κατὰ βραχὺ πρὸς μέλλοντας πολέμους γυμνάζονται. Ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ ἡ τοῦ Ῥωμανοῦ βασιλεία λαμπρὰ τις αὐτοῖς νεόμιστο καὶ περιφανῆς, ἀσύντακτοί τε ἐτι ταῖς παρασκευαῖς ἦσαν, ἐπειδὴ κάκεινος βραχὺν τινὰ χρόνον ἐπιβίωσας τῆ βασιλείᾳ μετήλλακτο, καὶ εἰς ἄσημόν τινὰ τὸν Μιχαῖλ τὸ κράτος μετέπεσεν, ἐπ' αὐτὸν καὶ δὴ τὰς οἰκείας δυνά μεις ἐξώπλιζον, καὶ δεῖν ἐγνωκότες διὰ θαλάττης πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐμβαλεῖν, ὑλοτομήσαντες ἄνωθεν καὶ σκάφη μικρὰ τε καὶ μεῖζω διαγεγλυφότες, καὶ λανθανόντως κατὰ βραχὺ ἱκανῶς παρασκευασάμενοι, μεγάλῳ δὴ στόλῳ ἐπὶ τὸν Μιχαῖλ καταπλεῖν ἔμελλον· ἐν ὅσῳ δὲ ταῦτα ἐκείνοις ἠντρέπιστο καὶ ὁ πόλεμος ἔμελλε, προλαμβάνει τὸν ἐκείνων κατάπλου καὶ οὗτος ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν ἐντελεύθην ἀπαναστάς· ὡς δὲ καὶ ὁ μετ' ἐκείνων οὐ πάνυ τι τὸ ἴχνος ἐρείσας τοῖς βασιλείοις ἀπεληλύθει, ἠδραστο δὲ τὸ κράτος ἐπὶ τὸν Κωνσταντῖνον, εἰ καὶ μηδὲν οἱ βάρβαροι τοῦτον εἶχον ἐπὶ τῷ πολέμῳ καταιτιᾶσθαι, ἀλλ' ἵνα μὴ ἄπρακτος αὐτοῖς ἢ παρασκευὴ νομισθεῖη, ἀπροφάσιστον πρὸς ἐκείνον ἀναρρήγνυνται πόλεμον· ἢ μὲν οὖν ἀναίτιος αἰτία τῆς ἐπὶ τὸν αὐτοκράτορα ἐκείνων ὀρμῆς αὐτῆ”.

us. After the emperor Basil had died (he was a real terror to the Russians) and after his brother Constantine, his successor, had fulfilled the allotted span of his life too (an event that marked the end of a noble dynasty), they once more revived their ancient antagonism and little by little trained themselves for future struggles. Some traces of glory and distinction in Romanus's reign impressed them -- their preparations were in any case still incomplete -- but when he died soon after his accession, and when power fell into the hands of some obscure person called Michael, they proceeded to mobilize all their forces. Recognizing the necessity of a sea-borne invasion, if any attack was to be launched against us, they cut down trees in the interior and made boats large and small. Step by step their preparations were made in secret until they were ready for war. A great fleet was, in fact, on the point of sailing against Michael, but while they were making the final adjustments and war hung in the balance this emperor, too, died before the assault was begun. His successor, without making any notable contribution to national affairs, also departed this life, and the Empire passed into the safe keeping of Constantine. There was no complaint, as far as he was concerned, that the barbarians could make to justify the war, but lest their efforts should seem to be wasted, they attacked him fiercely without provocation. Such was the cause then -- the unjustifiable cause -- of their assault on the emperor”.

In contrast, the *History* of Michaēl Attaleiatēs (Attaleiates, Michael 2012: 32-35¹⁰) does not record any specific cause of the

¹⁰ This is the passage in Attaleiatēs' text as rendered by Kaldellis and Krallis (Attaleiates, Michael 2012: 32-35): “Ἀπαλλαγείς οὖν ὁ Βασιλεὺς τῆς τοσαύτης φροντίδος, εἰς ἑτέραν αὐθις ἀνάγκην ἐνέπεσεν, πόλεμος γὰρ ἀλλόφυλος ναυτικὸς ἄχρι τῆς Προποντίδος τὴν Βασιλίδαν κατέλαβε, πλοίων ῥωσικῶν τῶν τετρακοσίων οὐκ ἀποδεόντων, ἐπιρραζάντων αὐτῇ καταφράκτων ὄπλοις τε καὶ πολεμικῇ ἐμπειρίᾳ καὶ πλήθει τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς εἰσπλεόντων. Καὶ κατεῖχε φόβος τὴν Βύζαντος οὐκ ἐλάχιστος, διὰ τὸ ἀπάρασκευω ἐκ τῆς ἀπροόπτου τοῦ ἔθνους ἐπιδημίας. Ὅμως τὰ παρατυχόντα μακρὰ πλοῖα καὶ λοιπὰς ἑτέρας αὐτῶν πολεμικὰς ὁ Βασιλεὺς συστησάμενος καὶ πεζικῇ δυνάμει τοὺς παρακειμένους αἰγιαλοὺς συμπεριλαβὼν καὶ προσθήκην ἐκάστοτε τῆς πεζικῆς καὶ ναυτικῆς ἰσχύος λαμβανούσης διὰ γραμμάτων φοιτῶντων εἰς τὰς κατὰ χώραν ἡγεμονίας, ἐν ἡμέρᾳ πρώτη τῆς ἐβδομάδος, ἦν κυριακὴν ὁ χριστιανικώτατος οἶδε λαὸς ἐκ τῆς τοῦ

war, let alone an “insane hatred,” but clearly refers to the Rus’ as “foreign,” which, in this excerpt, is the word *Kaldellis* and *Krallis* translate from the words “ἔθνους” and “ἀλλόφυλος”:

“...the emperor then immediately had to face another necessary task, a naval war against a foreign (ἀλλόφυλος) fleet. Rus’ ships, no fewer than four hundred, penetrated to the Propontis and reached the Reigning City, which they attacked. Their crews were heavily armed, experienced in war, and numerous. The City of Byzas panicked in fear, as no preparations had been made to meet this unexpected foreign (ἔθνους) invasion. But the emperor assembled as many long ships as happened to be presented, along with other assorted naval vessels, and he arrayed infantry forces along the adjacent shores. Both the naval and the infantry forces were strengthened by provincial units, following orders that were dispatched to them. On the first day of the week, which the most Christian people call the Lord’s Day after the Resurrection of our Lord, the emperor deployed both types of forces and he himself sailed up in the imperial barge. He gave the signal for battle to begin and attacked the enemy. The prows of his ships glowed with Median fire. Engaging with the enemy, he forced them to retreat after burning many of their ships, sending others to the depths with all hands, and taking some captive along with their crews”.

The *Synopsis* of *Skylitzēs* is the only source which gives a consideration of the cause of the war, providing perhaps the longest, most balanced and detailed account of the episode, even though the author confuses the Vladimir, *son* of Jaroslav, with the Vladimir, *father* of Jaroslav, and is written roughly half a century after these events, compared to *Psellos’* eyewitness account (*Skylitzes Ioannis* 2010: 404-407; *Skylitzes Ioannis* 1973: 430-433

Κυρίου ἡμῶν Αναστάσεως, ἐκτάξας ἄμφω τὰς δυνάμεις, ἀνήλθε γὰρ καὶ | αὐτὸς μετὰ τῆς Βασιλικῆς νεώς, καὶ τὸ ἐνούλιον ἀλαλάξει προστάξας, ἐπῆλθε τοῖς ἐναντίοις, τὰς πύργους λελαμπρυσμένας ἔχων τῶν οἰκείων νεῶν τῷ μηδικῷ πυρὶ καὶ συρραγεῖς τούτοις φυγεῖν κατηνάγκασε, πολλὰς μὲν τῶν νεῶν κατακαύσας πυρὶ, ἄλλας αὐτάνδρους καταβαλὼν τῷ βυθῷ, τινὰς δ’ αὐτοῖς πλωτῆρσι κεκρατηκώς”.

[21:6]¹¹). Nevertheless, according to Skylitzēs, the war was caused by a marketplace dispute that resulted in the murder of “an illustrious Scyth”:

“In the month of July, the same year of the indiction, the Russians attacked the capital. Until then they had been allies of the Romans and at peace with them. [The two peoples] had mingled with each other without fear and sent merchants to each other. But at this time a dispute arose with some Scyth merchants at Byzantium; the matter escalated out of hand and an illustrious Scyth was killed. Vladimir, an impulsive man who often gave free reign to his wrath, was at the time ruler of [the Russian] race ‘γένους’. When he heard what had happened, he exploded in anger. Without the slightest delay, he raised up all the fighting force under his command and took as allies a considerable number of the people inhabiting the islands to the north of the ocean. They say he assembled a host of around one hundred thousand men, put them aboard the ships the local people call drakhars ‘μονοξύλοις’ and set out against the city.”

Finally, we may turn to the sole Rus’ account, contained in the Laurentian redaction of the *Povest’ Vremennykh Let* (ПСРЛ. Т. 1: 154¹²; The Russian Primary Chronicle 1953: 138-139, 260-

¹¹ This is the passage in Skylitzēs’ text as rendered by Thurn (Skylitzes Ioannis 1973: 430-433 [21:6]): “Ἐγένετο δὲ καὶ κατὰ τὸν Ἰούλιον μῆνα τῆς αὐτῆς ἰνδικτιῶνος καὶ ἡ τοῦ ἔθνους τῶν Ῥῶς κίνησις κατὰ τῆς βασιλείδος, οὗτοι γὰρ κοινοπραγοῦντες μέχρι τοῦδε Ῥωμαίοις καὶ εἰρηνεύοντες μετ’ αὐτῶν, ἀδεῶς τε ἀλλήλοις ἐπεμίγνυντο καὶ ἐμπόρους ἐς ἀλλήλους ἔπεμπον. κατὰ δὲ τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον φιλονεικίας γενομένης ἐν Βυζαντίῳ μετὰ τινῶν ἐμπόρων Σκυθῶν, συμπληγάδος τε ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἐπακολουθησάσης καὶ τινος Σκύθου φονευθέντος ἐπιφανοῦς, ὁ τότε κατάρχων τοῦ γένους τούτων Βλαδιμηρός, ἀνὴρ ὀρηγίας καὶ τὰ πολλὰ τῷ θυμῷ χαρίζομενος, πυθόμενος τὸ συμβάν καὶ δεινοπαθήσας καὶ μὴ δοῦς ἀναβολὴν ἢ καιρὸν τῷ κινήματι, τῶν ὑπ’ αὐτὸν ἀγείρας ὅσον μάχιμον, προσεταιρισάμενος δὲ καὶ συμμαχικὸν οὐκ ὀλίγον ἀπὸ τῶν κατοικοῦντων ἐν ταῖς προσαρκτικαῖς τοῦ Ὠκεανοῦ νήσοις ἔθνῶν, καὶ πλῆθος ἀθροίσας, ὡς φασι, περὶ τὰς ἑκατὸν χιλιάδας, καὶ πλοίοις ἐγχωρίοις τοῖς λεγομένοις ἐμβαλὼν μονοξύλοις κατὰ τῆς πόλεως ἐξορμᾷ.”

¹² According to the *Povest’ Vremennykh Let* under the year 6551/1043:

“Посла ѿРославъ снѣ своѣго Володимера на Грькы, и вда ему вой многоъ. а воеводство поручи Вѣшатъ, вѣтцѣ ѿНеву. и поиде Володимеръ въ лодыяхъ, и придоша въ Дунай, поидоша ко Царюграду; и бысть бурѧ

261 n175). The trouble with interpreting the event is that, like Vladimir's Chersōn campaign of 987-989 (Feldman 2013), the *PVL* does not relate why he chose to attack the Empire in the first place, and we are left with a somewhat disputed *casus belli*. According to this source, in the year 1043:

“Yaroslav sent his son Vladimir to attack Greece, and entrusted him with a large force. He assigned the command to Vyshata, father of Yan. Vladimir set out by ship, arrived at the Danube, and proceeded toward Tsar’grad. A great storm arose which broke up the ships of the Russes; the wind damaged even the Prince's vessel, and Ivan, son of Tvorimir, Yaroslav's general, took the Prince into his boat. The other soldiers of Vladimir to the number of six thousand were cast on shore, and desired to return to Rus', but none of the Prince's retainers went with them. Then Vyshata announced that he would accompany them, and disembarked from his vessel to join them, exclaiming, ‘If I survive, it will be with the soldiers, and if I perish, it will be with the Prince's retainers’. They thus set out to return to Rus'. It now became known to the Greeks how the Russes had suffered from the storm, and the Emperor, who was called Monomakh, sent fourteen ships to pursue them. When Vladimir and his retainers perceived that the Greeks were pursuing them, he wheeled about, dispersed the Greek ships, and returned to Rus' on his ships. But the Greeks

велика, и разби корабли Руси, и князь корабль разби вѣтръ, и взѣ княза в корабль Иванъ Творимиричь, воєвода Ярославль. прочіи же вои Володимери ввержени быша на брегъ, числомъ ꙗко, и хотѣче поити въ Русь, и не иде съ ними никтоже ꙗко дружины княжеє. И рече Вышата азъ поиду с ними, и высѣде ис корабля с ними, и реч: “аще живъ буду то съ нимъ . аще погъну то съ друженою.” и поидоша хотѣше въ Русь. И бысть вѣсть Грькомъ, ꙗко избило море Русь, и послав царь именемъ Мономахъ, по Руси владѣй дѣ; Володимеръ же видѣвъ съ дружиною, ꙗко идуть по нихъ, въсплативъса изби влади Гречьскыя, и възвратиса въ Русь, сѣдавшеся въ корабль своѣ. Вышату же љша съ изверженными на брегъ, и привелоша љ Царюграду, и слѣпиша Руси много; по трехъ же лѣтѣхъ миру бывшю, пущень бысть Вышата въ Русь къ Ярославу.”

captured Vyshata, in company with those who had been cast on land, and brought them to Tsar'grad, where they blinded many of the captive Russes. After peace had prevailed for three years thereafter, Vyshata was sent back to Yaroslav in Rus' ”.

Considering the scholarship surrounding the events in question, perhaps the most extensive analysis of the event is given by Andrzej Poppe (Poppe 1971: 1-29) and subsequent scholars (Arrignon 1983: 135-136; Martin 1995: 46), who maintain that, reflecting the events in 987-989, Jaroslav Vladimirovič (r. 1016-1054), the then ruler in Kiev, had sent a force under his son Vladimir to support the Maniakēs rebellion against the concurrent emperor Constantine IX Monomachos (r. 1042-1055). Brjusova (Брюсова 1972: 51-62) instead points out that a number of alleged Chersōnite antiquities and legends, concerning for example the so-called “Korsonian” bronze doors in the St. Sophia church of Novgorod from later centuries, suggests that Vladimir Jaroslavič returned to Crimea to attack Chersōn all over again in the following year (1044-1045)¹³.

¹³ Her reasoning is as follows: the presence of a 16th century Polish account of the 1043 campaign by the poet Maciej Strykowski, who states, similarly to the account of Vladimir's conversion in 988-989 in the *PVL*, that Jaroslav sent his son Vladimir to attack the empire, however this account alleges that it was rather Chersōn instead of Constantinople. Additionally, Brjusova attributes legends from Novgorod which sought to connect Vladimir Jaroslavič's 1045 foundation of the Novgorodian Saint Sophia Cathedral with his imagined victory over the Empire. This was supposedly supported by the “Korsun Treasures” (Корсунских древностей) housed in the cathedral and originally deposited by none other than Vladimir himself, although in the 16-17th Novgorodian legends, he is usually confused with his grandfather, prince St. Vladimir Svjatoslavič, instead of Vladimir Jaroslavič. These legends were then disseminated outside of Rus' by contemporary authors such as Sigismund von Herberstein (1486-1566) and Paul Zaim of Aleppo (1627-1669), who both refer to the copper cathedral gate as originally seized by the Novgorodians themselves from Chersōn in the 11th century. Perhaps the best evidence Brjusova deploys is an inscription from Chersōn dated to ca. 1059 which purports a replacement of the city gate. Yet it seems to me this is not enough to merit completely revising the episode's interpretation when three Byzantine authors and the *PVL* make account for the battle occurring in the vicinity of Constantinople and/or the mouth of the Bosphoros.

However, Poppe, in later articles (Poppe 1981: 407-418; Poppe 1984: 71-104), demonstrates that in fact the so-called “Chersonian Antiquities” in Novgorod were nothing more than instruments of legitimization and pilgrimage devotion in the 16-17th centuries.

While we ought not concern ourselves with teleological reasoning for reinterpreting the Byzantine-Rus’ war of 1043, it is worth noting that as far as Franklin and Shepard are concerned (Franklin, Shepard 1996: 216), there is no need, as Brjusova has, to overcomplicate the matter with conjecture not derived directly from the sources, who instead attributes the cause of the war to Jaroslav’s personal insecurities. In short, Franklin and Shepard see “no necessary contradiction” in the nominal Orthodoxy of the two rulers going to war¹⁴. In terms of a conflict between two Orthodox Christian rulers in the first generation after conversion, it is perhaps a comparable sentiment with Symeon of Bulgaria, who fought against the Empire to little avail in the early 10th century, in an effort to gain what Stephenson (Stephenson 2000: 21) has summarized as “trade, tribute, and recognition of his imperial title,” and despite his deep Christianity and traditional Greek learning (Curta 2006: 213-227). In short, Symeon preferred war to peace with the Empire, which is easily juxtaposed with the case of Jaroslav, both of whom, in King’s words, engaged in “civil war within the bounds of Christendom” (King 2004: 78¹⁵). Psellos, as

¹⁴ Franklin and Shepard write: “According to Byzantine sources, the pretext for the 1043 campaign was trivial: a distinguished ‘Scyth’ had been killed as a result of a Market-place altercation in Constantinople. We do not know what deeper resentments prompted Jaroslav to launch such a major response to such an apparently minor incident, but the response is compatible with Jaroslav’s desire to be taken seriously, a reaction to Byzantine *inattentiveness* more than to Byzantine *over-attentiveness*. There is no necessary contradiction between the demonstratively Constantinopolitan style of Jaroslav’s public patronage and his campaign against Constantinople in 1043”.

¹⁵ King writes: “Christianity had been a powerful tool of statecraft for Byzantine emperors in their relations with the Rhos and the Bulgars. Conversion did not always prevent conflict, of course, but from the Byzantine perspective it certainly meant that conflict was of a different type – something closer to a civil

pointed out by Obolensky (Obolensky 1971: 225), described the event in precisely these terms, as “the rebellion of the Russians”. Instead it seems, there is little reason to disbelieve the sources or expect some manner of intrigue beyond the cause of the campaign according to Skylitzēs: the death of a Rus’ in a Constantinopolitan marketplace (Shepard 1978/1979: 147-212).

While the Kievan “state” has been regarded as a major player in these three events of the first half of the 11th c. (respectively in 1016, 1024 and 1043), acting with one purpose, due to such implications in the *PVL*, it appears that Rus’ actions were less unified than previously assumed. As the Rus’ had frequently functioned in their dealings with the Empire, they were at times unified under a single ruler, as in 987-989 and 1043, and other times, judging by the Byzantine sources, acting separately, as in 1016, 1024 and earlier operations from the 9-10th centuries. It may be more helpful to think of the Rus’ as independent warriors who pledged loyalty to a given ruler in return for successful raids. During this period, if a Kievan ruler could not guarantee his men riches, they could not guarantee their loyalty to him as this was the rulers’ primary mode of legitimacy, and his men’s allegiance, before Christian ecumenism took hold. This is not to say that the Rus’ in the first Christian generation after Vladimir were completely Christian and therefore the raid of 1043 can be understood as some sort of intra-imperial misunderstanding. Rather, despite the nominal Christianity of the Rus’ in the first generation after Vladimir’s baptism in 988-989, those engaged in cooperation or warfare in the Black Sea region with Byzantium were still propelled, to varying degrees, by pre-Christian expectations of raids and booty. Additionally, Jaroslav’s decision to instigate the raid of 1043, in contrast to the disparate Rus’ engagements with Byzantium in the Black Sea region in the previous years of 1016 and 1024, could also be seen as an ultimately misguided attempt to impose a semblance of unity in

war within the bounds of Christendom than a battle across the lines between believer and infidel”.

Rus' late in his life. Finally, such varying degrees of Christian observance in the first Rus' generation after Vladimir's baptism, should demonstrate the inconsistency of Rus' actions with regard to Byzantium in the Black Sea region. Taken together, these affairs may also display Jaroslav's reign in early 11th-c. Rus' as less monolithic than hitherto imagined.

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Title: The First Christian Rus' Generation: Contextualizing the Black Sea Events of 1016, 1024 and 1043.

Abstract: Many scholars have weighed in on the changing nature of the relationship between Byzantium and Russia throughout the late-10th century from prince Vladimir's baptism onwards into the 11th century. In particular, three encounters between Christian Byzantine forces and the newly Christianized Rus' in the first half of the 11th century stand out as markers of a shifting dynamic on either side of the Black Sea. These three events, taking place in the years 1016, 1024 and 1043 respectively, as decades of scholarship have discussed, mark this dynamic as one transitioning from a pagan-versus-Christian dynamic to a rather more subtle paradigm of internecine Christian strife. Whereas some scholarly traditions have depicted this period as one of a developing and unifying Rus' "state," by assessing the events of these three years together, this article will attempt to demonstrate that the Rus' "state" ruled by Jaroslav Vladimirovič was not as unified or monolithic as previously supposed.

Key words: Kievan Rus', Jaroslav the Wise, Byzantine History, Black Sea History, Eleventh Century, Baptism of Russia, Naval Warfare, Orthodox Christianity.

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