Kievan Rus

Rise of Early Russia and the Great Schism
Kievan Rus

- Begun by invasion of Viking tribes – also known as Slavs – from north of the Baltic.
- Both trade partner and sometime enemy of the Byzantine Empire.
**Kievan Russia**

- **Rurik**, the leader of a people called the Rus, took control of Novgorod in A.D. 862.
- Rurik and his successors soon came to rule over Kiev as well as over Slavic tribes along the Dnieper River.
- The region under their control came to be called the Rus. The word *Russia* probably comes from this name.
- Kiev prospered because of its location along the rich trade route between Constantinople and the Baltic Sea.
- Kiev became the most important principality in Kievan Russia and served as the capital for nearly 300 years after about A.D. 879.
- As early as A.D. 911, Kiev was powerful enough to win a favorable trade treaty with the Byzantine Empire.
Government

- Many areas in Kievan Russia were led by princes who governed with the advice of councils made up of boyars, or nobles.
- Another institution in Kievan Russia was the veche, or town meeting where important matters like wars, disputes between princes, or emergencies were discussed.
- Yaroslav I, Yaroslav the Wise, ruled from A.D. 1019 to A.D. 1054, a great period in Russian history.
- He built many churches and introduced Russia's first law code, the Pravda Russkia (the "Russian Justice").
- Yaroslav's code combined elements of tribal customs and older laws and traditions. It outlined lawful responses in cases of violence and other harmful activity.
Yaroslav the Wise
A Church Built by Yaroslav
Religion

- Traders and Greek missionaries brought Christianity to Kievan Russia in the A.D. 800s.
- In the A.D. 980s the ruler Vladimir I sent observers to Christian church services in several places.
- His officials were impressed with what they saw and Vladimir wanted to marry Anna, the sister of the Byzantine emperor.
- In A.D. 988 he converted to Christianity.
- After converting he ordered all Kievans to become Christians. He also had all pagan statues destroyed.
Baptism of Vladimir I
Religion continued...

- The Byzantine church became a more and more important force in Kievan Russia.
- The patriarch in Constantinople chose the bishop of the Kievan church. Monasteries became centers of religious thought, social service, and the arts.
- When the Christian church split in A.D. 1054, the Kievans followed the Eastern Orthodox Church.
- Religious themes dominated Kievan culture during this period.
- Most writing focused on religion, in the form of hymns and sermons.
- Icon painting became the most distinctive Kievan art form. Artists also created mosaics and frescoes.
- Much of the decorative painting created by Kievan artists was designed to illustrate religious ideas and figures.
Early Byzantine Influences: Orthodox Christianity
Early Byzantine Influences: Orthodox Christianity
Iconoclastic Controversy
Economy

• Kievan Russia included two major agricultural regions; the steppe and the taiga.
• The grassy and mostly treeless plain in the south is called the steppe.
• The steppe has black, fertile soil that is ideal for agriculture.
• North of the steppe lies the taiga (ty·guh).
• The taiga has great forests and receives much rainfall; winters are long and cold, and the growing season on the taiga is short.
• The steppe gets less rain than the taiga, however, the steppe has a milder climate and a longer growing season.
• People in the steppe had more time to plant and harvest crops.
Taiga
Russian Winters

• Winter in Russia can be VERY cold and frigid.
• The following photos are pictures of Kiev in the winter.
Economy continued...

- Kievan Russia traded agricultural goods and wood, iron, salt, furs, and honey with the Byzantines.
- Kievan Russia also provided slaves for the Byzantines.
- In return, the Kievans received goods such as wine, silk, spices, fruit, jewelry, silver, and textiles.
- By the early A.D. 1000s, trade had helped Kievan Russia become a strong, wealthy power.
- Several social classes emerged in Kievan Russia.
- At the top were the local princes and their families, followed by the boyars, or nobles.
Russian Clergy

- Next were the town artisans and merchants, who devoted themselves to trade.
- The largest and lowest class, however, were the peasants. Peasants lived in small villages in the country and produced the crops that fed Kievan Russia.
- The clergy formed another important group. Clergy performed religious ceremonies and ran hospitals and charities.
Attacks on Kiev

• Kiev had declined because Kievan rulers gave the outlying towns to their sons to rule independently.

• In A.D. 1169 and A.D. 1203, groups of princes sacked Kiev, ruining the city's prosperity. New invaders, the Mongols, took advantage of Kiev's weakness.

• The Mongols came from the Asian steppe east of the Ural Mountains. By A.D. 1240 they had conquered or destroyed almost every city in Kievan Russia.

• Mongols controlled Kievan Russia until the late A.D. 1400s.
Ivan the Great

- In time Mongol rule grew weaker. The princes of the region became more independent.
- From A.D. 1462 to A.D. 1505 Ivan III, also called Ivan the Great, ruled as Great Prince.
- By this time Moscow had begun to assert its independence from the Mongols.
The Rise of Moscow

• By A.D. 1480 Ivan III no longer acknowledged the Mongol khan as Moscow's supreme ruler.

• Ivan III became the first ruler of the independent state called Russia.

• He gained more territory through military conquest.

• His rule began a long tradition of absolute monarchy in Russia.
Ivan the Great (r. 1462-1505)

Ivan III Tearing the Great Khan’s Letter Requesting More Tribute in 1480.
Ivan the Terrible

- **(1530-1584) Ivan the Terrible** - Centralized royal power
- Introduced new laws that tied Russian serfs to the land
- Used agents of terror to consolidate his power
- Had thousands of people killed because he suspected a plot.
Discussion Questions:

• Why was early Russia strongly influenced by the Byzantine Empire?

• How did Orthodox Christianity come to be the major religion in Russia?

• What importance did geography have in the development of Kiev as a powerful city?