Saints and Sainthood around the Baltic Sea
FIRST, A FEW WORDS about the terms Rus’ and Varangians, both of which for periods in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries appear as ethnic or semi-ethnic terms denoting Scandinavians, although they both had their origin as functional rather than ethnic terms.1

In this chapter “Varangians” is used to denote Scandinavians or people of Scandinavian descent active in the East, even when these were still known as Rus’, which they were until the mid-tenth century: I only use Rus’ about the Rus’ polity or state, or when I quote contemporary sources where Rus’ in fact does signify Scandinavians. This is done in order to avoid confusion, because the term Rus’ during the period we are dealing with, the tenth-eleventh century, gradually changed its meaning so that it first began to include the Slavic majority population of the Rus’ polity and finally took on its present meaning, denoting the East-Slavic population of Rus’.

This does not mean that the term Varangian/Varangians does not also begin to change its semantic content during the period we are concerned with here. It does, however, still denote Scandinavians. But already in the late eleventh and early twelfth century, Varangian, if specifically linked to Christianity, suggests Christianity in its Latin/Roman form.2 This process is in fact embodied in the title, where “Varangian saints” are firmly linked to the Greek Orthodox Church whereas the “Christlike Varangians” originate in the Latin Church, although both groups were active in Kiev, albeit a century apart.3

Varangian Christianity
When first I got interested in the role Varangians may have played in spreading Christianity in Rus’ and Scandinavia, it was in order to explain
some phenomena I found difficult to understand when observing early Christianity in Rus’ and Scandinavia, but which could perhaps be explained as a result of early Christian Varangians traveling between Byzantium and Scandinavia through Rus’. In that context, I also coined the phrase “Varangian Christianity” to indicate types of influence that could in my opinion be assigned to Varangians.

Foremost among these phenomena was the intriguing presence in the Finnish Christian vocabulary of a number of words that, as linguists agree, can only have their origin in Old East Slavonic, perhaps with Old Church Slavonic as medium. They consist of such fundamental Christian expressions as:

\[
\begin{align*}
pappi & < \text{pop (попъ)} = \text{priest;} \\
risti & < \text{krest (кресть)} = \text{cross;} \\
pakana & < \text{pogan (поганъ)} = \text{heathen;} \\
kummi & < \text{kum (кум)} = \text{godfather;} \\
raamattu & < \text{gramota (грамота)} = \text{bible, scripture;} \\
räähkä & < \text{grekh (грехъ)} = \text{sin}; \text{and} \\
paasto & < \text{post (постъ)} = \text{lent.}
\end{align*}
\]

Traditionally, the Finns are thought to have adopted Christianity as result of a Swedish crusade in the aftermath of the Second Crusade in 1147. To suggest, as Enn Tarvel has done, that this Church Slavonic vocabulary should have been introduced later in the Middle Ages after a corresponding Latin vocabulary had already been in place is hardly feasible. Here we must remember that the crusades were sponsored by a reform papacy wishing to centralize, dominate, and force local Christian usages into compliance with a strict set of rules. In central Europe this included a ban on the use of Church Slavonic, when Pope Gregory VII in 1080 denied Duke Vratislav II of Bohemia the right to use Church Slavonic. The result was that the last vestiges of the Church Slavonic rite within this region of the Western Church were eradicated in 1096, when the Sázava Monastery in Bohemia was “Latinized.”

Therefore the Church Slavonic vocabulary in Finnish must have been introduced earlier than the crusades. Furthermore, for this vocabulary to have survived the enforced Latin mission that followed upon the crusades, a substantial number of Christians familiar with the Old Church Slavonic rite must have been present in the region that was first targeted by the western crusade: Satakunta, with Eura (Luistari) and V akka-Suomi.
with Laitila-Kalanti, and, perhaps, Finland Proper (Varsinais-Suomi) all in the southwestern part of present-day Finland.\textsuperscript{10} That there were indeed Christians in precisely this region at least a century prior to the crusades is today confirmed by archaeological data, and, according to Paula Purhonen, there were no pagan burials later than the first decades of the eleventh century in Laitila-Kalanti.\textsuperscript{11} Important with regard to early Christianity in this region is also that during the eleventh century, Finns, according to Pirkko-Liisa Lehtosalo-Hilander, began to bury their dead in separate inhumation cemeteries, some supplied with belfries. This in itself indicates the existence here of an early church organization a century prior to the crusades. Moreover, Viking-age finds in this region, on one hand, show similarity with finds in Scandinavia and, on the other, display Byzantine influence. This indicates that the population here had links to both Sweden and to Byzantium, just as we have evidence along “the road from the Varangians to the Greeks” (the system of rivers linking the Baltic and Black Seas)\textsuperscript{12} that people from Finnish territory took part in traffic along this route.\textsuperscript{13}

**On the Early Spread of Christianity**

With regard to early Christianization in what we could call the Scandinavian commonwealth—Rus’ and Scandinavia—it is generally assumed that Scandinavia was Christianized from and by the Western Church, Rus’ from and by the Eastern Church. It is also still—if not as much as earlier—assumed that the baptism of the respective rulers played major roles in this process: Harald Bluetooth in Denmark ca. 965 and, in Rus’, Vladimir Sviatoslavich 988/89. However, in all the hitherto pagan territories where Scandinavians played major roles, archaeological data to a still larger extent suggest that Christianity was quite widespread long before these “official” baptisms. That is the case in Denmark,\textsuperscript{14} and more importantly in our context, it was the case in Rus’.\textsuperscript{15}

It is also assumed, not least in Swedish historiography, that Christianization came about through missionaries, who sought out pagan Scandinavians at home, as if a pagan Scandinavian could not adopt Christianity unless he met up with visiting missionaries.\textsuperscript{16} This attitude toward the process of Christianization among the Scandinavians is surprising in at least two respects: First, already Rimbert in his *Life of St. Ansgar* reports on Scandinavians who adopted Christianity because they
had experienced it abroad, in this case in Dorestad. Similar information can be found in the Gutasaga concerning Gotlanders who traveled in the East, were baptized, brought back priests, and eventually received visiting bishops who arrived from the Holy Land through Rus.

Secondly the Viking age, which is the period when Christianity struck root in the entire Scandinavian commonwealth, including Rus’, was also the period when Scandinavians traveled to an extent they had never done before—and to a large extent returned. During these travels they visited ancient Christian centers and became acquainted with Christianity without ever having to meet a missionary.

Among these Christian centers one stands out with regard to the Christian influence it could impart on its Scandinavian visitors: the Byzantine Empire and especially its capital, Constantinople.

By contrast to the Scandinavians active in the West, who in quick succession harassed and plundered churches and monasteries in the British Isles and along the Frankish coasts and rivers before they hurriedly retreated, it is important to bear in mind that those Scandinavians who frequented Byzantium often stayed there for prolonged periods. Most Scandinavians probably arrived in order to join the Byzantine imperial forces, others came as merchants, or they combined aspects of these activities. In any case they acquainted themselves with Byzantine Christianity and adapted to the Byzantine way of life.

In this connection, it is often overlooked or ignored how many Scandinavians must have traveled to Byzantium during the Viking age and its immediate aftermath. That applies first of all to those who came to do service in the imperial armies, either as part of the Rus’ contingents we know about at least from the beginning of the tenth century or, later, as part of the famed Varangian Guard from the late tenth century onwards. All in all, Scandinavians must have gone to Byzantium in their thousands, otherwise Byzantine emperors would not have been able to field armies that could count several thousand Varangians in one battle, as did Constantine IX Monomachos in 1045.

In recent historiography it is often assumed that it was the privileged segment of Scandinavians who first adopted Christianity, so it was from this segment that Christian beliefs filtered down through the society. Also here we should remember that those who joined the imperial armies in Byzantium had to belong to precisely this segment of Scandinavian society. In order to join the Byzantine army Scandinavians to begin with had to possess the necessary military skills; moreover they not only
had to pay their way to Byzantium, but they also had to pay their way into the army because, in order to join the Varangian Guard, they had initially to pay a substantial “entrance fee,” before they could start to earn the kind of riches both in salary and, not least, in spoils from the type of military activities that we hear about in the case of Harald Hardradi. These riches allowed Harald, after he left Byzantium, to buy his way to the royal crown in Norway.20 Widely traveled Scandinavian magnates of this kind were, therefore, probably among the first in their respective regions to adopt Christianity even before the “official” baptisms of the rulers.

The Russo-Byzantine Treaties

Although increasingly important, archaeological data are nevertheless difficult to evaluate with regard to whether a person buried with Christian objects, lying in a certain position, was really a Christian. Therefore it is important that on the subject of early Christianity in Rus’ we do not have to rely merely on archaeological data, nor are we dependent on narrative sources like Rimbert’s *Vita Anskarii* or Adam of Bremen’s chronicle of the bishops of Hamburg-Bremen with their vested interests.

In the early Russian chronicle, *Povest’ vremennykh let* (The Tale of Bygone Years published in an English translation under the misleading title, The Russian Primary Chronicle),21 the author had, by contrast to his immediate predecessor, access to the texts of a number treaties Rus’ had concluded with Byzantine emperors in 907, 911, 944, and 971. Their original versions were probably written in Greek, translated into Old East Slavonic before they were included in the chronicle.

It is generally agreed these translations faithfully reflect the contents of the original treaties.22 Moreover, as performative sources these texts are far superior to any other sources that inform us of the spread of Christianity among Scandinavians in this early period.

In the early treaties (907 and 911), both the Rus’ envoys and their ruler Prince Oleg (H-l-g-w or Helgi, in a contemporary Khazar source) are portrayed as pagans, who swear their oaths by their gods and on their weapons, just as Danes, according to Adam of Bremen, did, when they made peace with the Franks in the time of Louis the Pious.23 By contrast, the Byzantines are in these treaties referred to either as Greeks or simply as Christians, as if the two terms were synonymous, and they take their oaths by kissing the cross.24
In the third treaty, from 944, this has changed completely. The treaty contains sixteen articles and lists no fewer than seventy-two or seventy-three names by whom or on whose behalf the treaty was concluded on the part of Rus’. As in the previous treaties, almost all the names of the Rus’ mentioned in the text are clearly of Scandinavian origin.25

By contrast to the previous treaties, the 944 treaty repeatedly, when relevant, distinguishes between those Rus’ who are still pagan and those who are now Christians. Accordingly, the treaty stipulates that “the Christian Rus’ shall so swear according to their faith, and the non-Christians after their custom.” The chronicler ends his quotation from the treaty with a report by the Greek envoys on its ratification by the Rus’ in Kiev,

in the morning, Igor’ (the ruling prince, Ing[v]or in a contemporary Greek source) summoned the envoys, and went to a hill on which there was a statue of Perun. The Rus’ laid down their weapons, their shields, and their gold ornaments, and Igor’ and his people took oath (at least, such as were pagans), while the Christian Rus’ took oath in the church of St. Elijah.

The situation of the Elijah Church, the author of the Povest’ vremennykh let, writing ca. 1110, goes on to expound, “is above the creek, in the vicinity of the Pasyncha square and the quarter of the Khazars. This was, in fact, the cathedral church (sobornaia tserkvi), since many of the Varangians were Christians.”26

On the basis of this text we can conclude that between 911 and 944 a significant number of Scandinavians or people of Scandinavian descent in Rus’ had decided to adopt Christianity, presumably by individual choice, perhaps while staying in Byzantium. Furthermore, the fact that a separate ratification to this international treaty by the Christian Rus’ was now a necessity shows that Christianity by 944 had obtained official status in Rus’ almost half a century before the conversion of its ruler, Grand Prince Vladimir Sviatoslavich.

The Two Varangian Saints

It was only in 988 or 989 that Vladimir, in connection with his marriage to a Byzantine princess, decided to adopt Christianity. According to the Povest’ vremennykh let, this decision was preceded by a period of pagan revival, and it is during this that we first meet our two Varangian saints. Under the year 983, the Povest’ vremennykh let reports that Vladimir
Sviatoslavich, returning to Kiev from a victorious battle, wished to make a sacrifice to the idols (kumiry). It was proposed that lots should be cast for a youth and a maiden, who were then to be sacrificed.

The chronicler then relates the story of a certain Varangian, whose mansion (dvor) is said to have been located where Vladimir Sviatoslavich, soon after his conversion, built the first major stone church in Kiev, dedicated to the Mother of God and also known as the Church of the Tithes (the Desiatinniaia Tserkov’), in which Vladimir was later buried.

This Varangian, adhering to the Christian faith, had arrived from Greece, and he had a son, “beautiful in both face and soul,” on whom the lot fell. Vladimir’s envoys came to the father and asked for the son to be handed over, so that he could be sacrificed to the gods (bozi). In response the Varangian claimed that,

these are not gods, but wood. Today they exist, tomorrow they will rot away. ... But God (Bog), Whom the Greeks serve and worship, is one Who created heaven and earth, the stars, the moon, the sun, and man, and gave him to live on earth. What, however, have these gods created? They are themselves created. I will not give my son to demons (besy).

On hearing this, Vladimir’s men armed themselves, marched against the Varangian, and broke down the fences around his house where the Varangian together with his son met them at the door. The men ordered the Varangian once more to hand over his son so that they could lead him to the gods. The Varangian, however, replied, “If they are gods, let them send one among them to take my son. Why do you need him?” Now Vladimir’s men forced the entrance and killed them both, “and nobody knows where they put them.”27 The latter comment is not found in the predecessor of the Povest’ vremennykh let,28 but most likely reflects a wish at the time the Povest’ was compiled (ca. 1110) to locate their relics.

The account of the killing of the two Varangians in the chronicle is followed by lengthy reflections on the humiliation the devil suffered here through the martyrdom of the two Varangians, who are said to have “received the heavenly crown, with the holy martyrs and the righteous.”

The names of the two Varangians are not mentioned in the chronicle text but in the hagiographic tradition they became known and venerated as “Feodor the Varangian and his son Ioann” with July 12 (old style, July 25 present style) as their feast day. No separate Life of the two martyrs has been preserved from the early period. But so-called Prologue Lives
do, however, appear in the early redactions of the Russian translation of Byzantine synaxaria (in Russian known as Prologues), preserved in manuscripts from the thirteenth–fourteenth century onwards. Here the name of the son appears, whereas the name of the father, Feodor, only appears in later redactions from the sixteenth–seventeenth century. On the other hand the early version of the Prologue Life of their implicit killer, St. Vladimir, does seemingly reveal the name of the father, when it claims that on the location where, after the baptism of Vladimir in 988/89, the citizens of Kiev were baptized, “now stands the church of the Holy Martyr Tur or Tury, the first intercessor in favor of our salvation.” This can only refer to the Varangian father, and the name must be interpreted as his original Scandinavian name, corresponding to Norse Þōrr or Þōrir/Þūrir (Thor/Thorir/Thorir). That would fit well with his choice of Feodor (Theodōros) as his baptismal name.

If the report in the chronicle tale is true, that Vladimir Sviatoslavich in the 990s decided to build his first major church (and later burial church) on the site of their martyrdom, that would be our earliest sign of the veneration in Rus’ of the two Varangians. When, during excavations in 1908–1914 under the ruined church, wooden structures appeared, these were immediately thought to be remnants of the Varangians’ manor. Today, however, most archaeologists think that the Church of the Tithes was built on the site of a former pagan cemetery and that these structures are the remains of a chamber grave. Therefore the story of the church on the site of the martyrdom is most likely a later invention added when the Povest’ vremennykh let or its predecessor was compiled in the 1090s or 1110s.

By then, the two Varangians were already in the process of being replaced as protomartyrs in Rus’ by the two dynastic martyrs Boris and Gleb (d. 1015), as they have been since then. Nonetheless, in some early sources we still find the two Varangians singled out as protomartyrs among the Orthodox Rus’. That applies first of all to the source to which we shall now turn our attention: the Paterikon (or Book of Fathers) of the Kievan Caves Monastery.

The Paterikon of the Kievan Caves Monastery

This work is undoubtedly one of the best-known and most important religious, literary works of medieval Rus’. But it is also a work that has had a complex history, combining as it does texts that originate at different times and in different environments. In form it is not strictly a paterikon,
that is, sayings by renowned monks (fathers) of the monastery. Instead, to quote a leading scholar on the subject, Fairy von Lilienfeld, it is a “collection of stories and other texts for the praise of the monastery as a sacred place where so many holy fathers had lived.” Von Lilienfeld moreover found that these stories and texts revealed the Caves Monastery to be, “not only a stronghold of piety, but also of ‘the Constantinople connection,’ i.e., of the ‘Greek faith,’ opposed to the Latin one ...”

The *Paterikon*, as we know it today, is with a few additions based on letters exchanged between a former monk in the Caves Monastery but now bishop in Suzdal’, Simon (d. 1226), and his younger pupil, Polikarp. Polikarp, still a monk in the monastery, disclosed in a now lost letter to Simon that he was not satisfied with his humble position as monk but had ambitions to rise in the ecclesiastical hierarchy to the office of bishop—an ambition that in Simon’s view in itself made Polikarp unfit for the office. In a response, which became the fourteenth tale (*slovo*) in the *Paterikon*, Simon therefore tried to persuade Polikarp to stay in the Caves Monastery by pointing to the holiness of the place due to the many memorable and pious monks who had preceded them in the caves. As models for Polikarp to follow, Simon, already in this letter, added descriptions of the lives of a selection of these monks. To these descriptions he added a further fifteen “tales.” These not only convinced Polikarp to stay in the monastery but inspired him, even after Simon had died, to supply an additional number of tales about monks and events in the monastery, based on sources available to him.

The collection was copied throughout the Middle Ages, but like almost all written sources for the early history of Rus’ (with the exception of the now archaeologically unearthed birch bark letters), all of the many preserved manuscripts of the *Paterikon* are late, from the fifteenth century onwards. These can be grouped in a number of redactions of which two, made in 1460 and 1462 by another monk in the monastery, Kassian, are usually seen best to reflect the original collection. Of these two redactions it is the second Kassian Redaction from 1462, with its total of thirty-eight tales, that forms the basis of modern editions.

Although a late tradition claims that our two Varangian martyrs were buried in the monastery, none of the thirty-eight tales focuses upon them. Nevertheless, they are mentioned in passing in the *Paterikon’s* crucial fourteenth tale, which laid the foundation of the *Paterikon*. After rather lengthy admonitions to Polikarp not to seek worldly glory, Bishop Simon provides a list of monks of the monastery who had later become
bishops. The first of these was Leontii, who in the 1070s was killed as bishop of the distant Rostov, where paganism still flourished. Therefore Leontii is said “with the two Varangians to be the third Rus’ citizen to be crowned by Christ, for whom they suffered.”

This claim is interesting in two respects. First, the two princely martyrs Boris and Gleb are not mentioned as martyrs prior to the martyrdom of Leontii. Boris and Gleb, sons of Vladimir Sviatoslavich, were killed in 1015 by an older brother in the struggle for the succession after Vladimir’s death, and today many both in and outside ecclesiastic circles see these two princely brothers as the protomartyrs in Russian Christianity. That they are not mentioned among martyrs before Leontii was killed in the 1070s suggests that their cult, contrary to the opinion of many, did not get off the ground before the three sons of Jaroslav Vladimirovich (d. 1054), Iziaslav, Sviatoslav, and Vsevolod, in a late show of unity in 1072, came together with the ecclesiastic hierarchy to perform a solemn translation of the brothers’ relics to a new church in Vyshgorod. This translation in 1072 exposes their cult as a joint dynastic–ecclesiastic initiative, similar to what happened in other newly converted countries, when murdered or slain kings and princes like Olav in Norway and the two Canutes in Denmark were promoted as martyrs by comparable alliances between rulers and the ecclesiastic leadership. The late date of the Boris-and-Gleb cult also has consequences for the frequent discussion as to whether there is a link, one way or another, between the hagiographical texts of these two martyrs and St. Olav of Norway.

More important in the present context is, however, that the text proves that the two Varangian martyrs were indeed by the 1070s considered not only saints in and by the Russian Church, but they were also considered to be its first martyrs.

The Christlike Varangians

While the mention in the Paterikon of the two Varangian martyrs is more or less accidental, other Varangians play a more substantial role not only in the composition of the Paterikon but also in the decisive years of the formation of the Caves Monastery, when the two later saints, Antonii (d. 1073) and Feodosii (d. 1074) were active. Basically, the Caves Monastery, according to the Paterikon, seeks its origin in St. Antonii’s decision to settle in a cave called the Varangian Cave. The focus of the compilers of the
Paterikon is, however, not on this stage but on the transformation of this
cave hermitage into a major monastery, and this only began with the build-
ing in the 1070s of the church, dedicated to the Dormition of the Mother
of God. Therefore, it is to this later stage that the Paterikon devotes its first
three tales, which formed part of Bishop Simon’s contribution. And it is
primarily these three tales that are important in the present context.

In the first tale we hear of the miraculous role a prominent
Varangian, called Shimon (Sigmundr?), came to play in the building of
this church. The tale starts by listing Shimon’s family relations, at least as
these were relevant in his Rus’ context,

In the Varangian land lived a prince by the name Afrikan, brother of
that Jakun (i.e. Hakon) the Blind, who lost his golden coat fight-
ing with Jaroslav against the ferocious Mstislav; this Afrikan had two
sons, Friand and Shimon; after their father’s death Jakun [now back
in Scandinavia] expelled both brothers from their lands. Shimon
came to our pious prince, Jaroslav, who, receiving and treating
him with honour, assigned him as senior to his son Vsevolod, and
he received great power from Vsevolod [Grand Prince of Kiev
1076–93].

In 1068, before attempting to fend off a Polovtsian or Cuman
attack on Rus’, the three ruling princes and sons of Jaroslav Vladimirovich,
Iziaslav, Sviatoslav, and Vsevolod, joined by Shimon, visited Antonii in
his cave to get his blessing. Antonii predicted their defeat but promised
Shimon that he would survive and eventually be buried in the church
that would one day be built at the monastery. Wounded after the bat-
tle, Shimon turned his eyes toward heaven and saw a large church similar
to one he had already seen in an earlier vision when he was threatened
by shipwreck back in Scandinavia. He now prayed the Lord to save him
through the intercession of his Mother and the venerable Fathers Antonii
and Feodosii.

Soon after, Shimon told Antonii about his two visions. He also told
Antonii that his father back home [in Scandinavia] had made a cross, on
which Christ had been portrayed in “a new way such as the Latins ven-
erate” (iakozhe Latina chtut). Furthermore, his father had adorned this
image of Christ with a girdle of gold and a golden crown.

When Shimon was expelled, he had taken the girdle and the crown
from the cross. As he did so, he heard a voice from the image of Christ
telling him not to put the crown on his own head but to bring it to a
place that had already been prepared. There, a church dedicated to “my Mother will be built by the venerable Feodosii. In his hand you shall give this so that it can hang over my altar.”

Shimon also told Antonii that, with regard to the girdle, it had already appeared in the vision he had had when he was shipwrecked, where the envisioned church was measured by the girdle. Antonii praised Shimon and proclaimed that Shimon’s name hereafter was to be Simon.

At this point, the author lets Antonii summon Feodosii to receive the girdle and the crown. From this point onward, the focus is on Feodosii and Simon, who bestowed rich gifts for the building of the church. During a conversation with Feodosii, Simon asked him to pray for him, his son Georgij, and all his descendants to the last one. Feodosii promised to do so. Simon, however, refused to part with Feodosii unless he got this prayer in writing. Feodosii agreed and wrote him a prayer, and the author significantly added that, “since then it became the practice to place the same prayer in a deceased’s hands. Before that nobody in Rus’ had done so.”

In both the second and the third tale, the *Paterikon* returns to some of the themes linked to Simon, now only referred to in his capacity as Varangian.

In the second tale, craftsmen from Constantinople come to Antonii and Feodosii, guided by the Mother of God, in order to build “Her church,” as mentioned in the first tale. Ordered by her Son, the Mother of God had told them that she had already sent his girdle as a measure for the church. Together with relics to be placed in the foundation of the church, the craftsmen also brought an icon of the Mother of God, which, in the words of Antonii, “nobody can have given except She, her Son, the Lord God and our saviour Jesus Christ, whose girdle and crown has been brought from the Varangians as the measure for the width, length and height of this precious church.”

In the third tale, we find a similar reference to the miraculous origin of the church and the role Varangians played, when we read that

even if you read through the books of the Old and New Testaments, nowhere will you find such miracles about holy churches as about this: from the Varangians and from our Lord Jesus Christ himself and from his praiseworthy, both godly and human image is the crown of Christ’s holy head. We have heard the divine voice from the image of Christ that has ordered the crown to be brought to the place made ready for it; and the heavenly voice ordered the measurement of the church, already seen before its creation, to be
made by this girdle. Likewise came the icon from the Greeks with the craftsmen together with relics of holy martyrs, placed under all the walls, where they are depicted over the relics on the walls.\footnote{49}

It should be noticed that these references to Varangians and the Christianity they represent are linked to Latinity, and it would be wrong to say that Shimon’s original Latinity played no role for the early author of the first three tales, but his view on this Latinity is far from negative, as von Lilienfeld would suggest it to be. Thus, despite his Latinity, Shimon is perceived almost as a divine messenger from both Christ and his Mother to Rus’ and to the Caves Monastery.

The two items, the girdle and the crown, which Shimon has taken from an explicitly Latin image of Christ, are adopted in the monastery as just as holy as the icon of the Mother of God, which was brought directly from Constantinople in the second tale. The girdle, as it is stressed in all three tales, was to be used as a measure for the new church. And, with regard to the crown, the choice of words in the third tale, “from the Varangians and from our Lord Jesus Christ himself and from his praise-worthy, both godly and human image is the crown of Christ’s holy head,” almost endows “Varangians” with a Christlike quality.

It is also noteworthy that, whether or not it was in fact a Latin practice to place a written prayer in a deceased person’s hands, the author stresses that this future Orthodox practice was introduced by and taken over from a Latin Christian.

Elsewhere in the \textit{Paterikon}, Varangians and their faith are also linked with Latinity although this may represent a later chronological overlay. As mentioned above, the cave in which Antonii decided to settle was called the Varangian Cave. This is the subject of the seventh tale, where it is said that the cave had originally been dug out by Varangians. Who these Varangians were, for what purpose they dug the cave, and what they represented is not mentioned here.\footnote{50} However, the thirty-third tale returns to the question, and here the name “Varangian Cave” is explained by a treasure once found, which was interpreted as a Varangian treasure because it contained “Latin chalices” (\textit{s`uddy latin`stii}).\footnote{51} True or not, this story seems to convey a thirteenth-century view that the origin of the Varangian Cave was indeed, like early Christianity in Rus’, linked to Christian Varangians and that these had used the cave before Antonii decided to settle there.

In one of the last and perhaps latest tales, the thirty-seventh, we find a further tale concerning the nature of the Varangian faith, where this is
seen as equivalent to Latinity, although now from an outspoken anti-Latin position. The tale is labeled “The Orthodox Prince Iziaslav’s Query about the Latin.” Here the Varangian faith is reputedly explained by St. Feodosii Pecherskii to Prince Iziaslav Jaroslavich. The attribution to St. Feodosii is, however, false. Rather it is the later abbot of the monastery, Feodosii Grek (1142–1156), who puts across the by-then-acrimonious Byzantine view on the Catholic Church. It may have been this tale that inspired Fairy von Lilienfeld to attribute anti-Latinity to both the Caves Monastery and to the Paterikon.

Concluding Remarks

In addition to the role Varangians played in the first half of the tenth century, when Christianity attained official status in Rus’ as reflected in the treaty Rus’ concluded with the Byzantine emperors in 944, other Varangians later came to play equally important roles in the formation of Christian Rus’: first the two Varangian saints and about a century later the Christlike Varangians.

We do not know for how long Christianity was able to maintain its official status after 944. It may have ended with death in 969 of the first Christian regent, if not ruler, Ol’ga, widow of Prince Igor’. While keeping contacts with Western ecclesiastics, Princess Ol’ga had consented to be baptized in Constantinople, probably in 957 but perhaps already in 945. Her son Sviatoslav (d. 972), however, assuming independent rule upon reaching his majority around 960, is reported in the Povest’ vremennykh let categorically to have refused his mother’s plea to be baptized, and when he signed a further treaty with the Byzantine emperor in 971, he did so by swearing his oath on his pagan gods, as his father, Prince Igor’ did in 944.

If Christianity still had a kind of status in society after the reign of Prince Sviatoslav, it did not save the two Varangians in 983, when they fell victim to Vladimir Sviatoslavich’s reputed pagan revival prior to his conversion a few years later. In this way, they became the emerging Rus’ Church’s first martyrs and were venerated as such.

As Scandinavians returning as Christians from Byzantium, the two Varangians appear to have been typical of those Varangians who one or two generations earlier had made the same journey and thus contributed to the formation of early Christianity in Rus’. When our Christlike Varangians made their impact, the situation was in many respects different. First of
all, Christianity had struck root both in Rus’ and in the Scandinavian homeland. In both places there seems to have been a growing awareness of differences between Greek Orthodoxy and the Latinity of the West. This is evident in the description of the Christlike Varangians in the *Paterikon of the Caves Monastery*. However, from the manner in which these Varangians and the two Varangian saints are presented in the *Paterikon* it is also obvious that this awareness was of little importance to the monks of the Caves Monastery, at least in the eleventh–twelfth century, when they held the early Varangian Christians in high regard, whether these represented the Orthodox Church, as the two martyred Varangian saints did, or they represented, as did the Christlike Varangians, the Latin-Roman Church. Moreover, it was to a large extent these Christlike Varangians whom the authors of the *Paterikon* saw as cofounders of Christianity as it was to be practiced in the monastery: as a blend of influences from both Constantinople and the Latin West, much as I think the term “Varangian Christianity” should be understood.

Finally, on a more general level, the role Varangians played in early Christianity in Rus’ in the tenth and eleventh century, before and after Vladimir Sviatoslavich decided to undergo baptism in 988/89, allows us to draw two important conclusions. First, the baptism of Vladimir Sviatoslavich was not such an epoch-making event as it has been made into, not just by the Church but also by the scholarly world—here it suffices to point to the many symposia that were arranged in many corners of the world, celebrating the millennium of Christianity in Rus’ in 1988/89, followed by a number of major publications. Secondly, the split between Constantinople and Rome in 1054 hardly had any effect on the role Varangians were able to play in the Christianization of Rus’.

NOTES

1 Originally the term Rus’ was linked to the organization of naval warfare in rowed ships among early Swedes with a presumed prehistoric form *rōþr*, while *Varangians* (Old Norse *Væringjar*) was used about persons enlisted by oath in some kind of commercial or military organization, see for instance John H. Lind, “Problems of Ethnicity in the Interpretation of Written Sources on Early Rus,” *Slavica Helsingiensia* 27 (2006): 255–57.

2 A sign of this change can be seen in some questions in a list of inquiries from the middle of the twelfth century, attributed to the monk Kirik (*Voproshanie Kirika*) and put to Archbishop Nifont of Novgorod (1130–1156). One question concerns
those Orthodox people who bring their children to the “Varangian priest” [in Novgorod, to be baptized]. These were now said to be “dual believers” and were to accept six weeks’ penance. The question shows that it must have been quite a widespread phenomenon for the average Rus’ in Novgorod to go to the Varangian priest, see for instance, John H. Lind, “Darkness in the East? Scandinavian Scholars on the Question of Eastern Influence in Scandinavia during the Viking Age and Early Middle Ages,” in From Goths to Varangians. Communication and Cultural Exchange Between the Baltic and the Black Sea, ed. Line Bjerg, John H. Lind and Søren M. Sindbæk (Århus, 2013), pp. 358–59.

3 Later, when Scandinavians took part in the crusades and these also targeted Russian orthodoxy, the term Varangians was gradually replaced as designator for Scandinavians by the derogative term Nemtsi (lit. the mute ones), which arose in Cyrillo-Methodian times as a term denouncing enemies of the Church-Slavonic rite, because they could not speak to God in their own languages, see John H. Lind, “Scandinavian Nemtsy and Repaganized Russians,” in The Expansion of the Latin West During the Baltic Crusades and its Confessional Repercussions, The Crusades and the Military Orders: Expanding the Frontiers of Medieval Latin Christianity, ed. Zsolt Hunyadi and József Laszlovszky, (Budapest, 2001), pp. 481–97; John Lind, “Понятие »немцы« как национально-конфессиональное определение. Его происхождение и ранние случаи употребления,” Средние века 62 (2001): 96–102.


9 As late as one year earlier, 1095, at the consecration of an altar in the monastery, relics of Boris and Gleb (lit. sancti Glebii et socii eius) were placed in the altar; Josef Emler, ed., Fontes rerum Bohemicarum (5 vols., Prague, 1873–93), 2:251.

10 It is true that we find no traces of a similar Christian vocabulary in Scandinavia that is influenced from the East. One reason for this could be that Scandinavians were already acquainted with a Christian vocabulary in related Germanic languages through multiple contacts with Christian populations in the Latin West or the odd vagrant missionary. The Finns did not have the same opportunity to acquaint themselves with a ready-made Christian vocabulary in a related language, see Lind, Darkness in the East?, p. 353.


12 So named in the early Russian chronicle Povest’ vremennykh let (Tale of Bygone Years), ca. 1110, which is published in “Лаврентьевская летопись,” ed. Afanasii F. Bychkov, 2nd edn., in Полное собрание русских летописей 1 (Leningrad, 1926), cols. 30–31.


16 On this and the following see also Lind, *Darkness in the East?*, pp. 341–67.


26 “Лаврентьевская летопись,” cols. 32–37. The fact that both the oath by the Christian Rus’ envoys in Constantinople and the ratification in Kiev by the Christian Rus’ took place in a church dedicated to St. Elijah has led some to doubt the reliability of the account, and after scholars became aware that a St. Elijah church did exist in Constantinople, it was the ratification in a St. Elijah church that was put in doubt, despite the chronicle compiler’s seemingly precise knowledge of its location in Kiev, see for instance Oleksiy P. Tolochko, “Church of St. Elijah, “Baptized Ruses’ and the Date of the Second Ruso-Byzantine Treaty,” *Byzantinoslavica*, 71 (2013): 111–28. This is discussed in John H. Lind, “Christianity on the Move: The Role of the Varangians in Rus’ and Scandinavia,” in *Byzantium and the Viking World*, ed. Fedir Androshchuk and Jonathan Shepard (Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia, 16, Uppsala, 2016).

27 “Лаврентьевская летопись,” cols. 82–83. The text is also found in the predecessor of the *Povest’ vremennykh let*, the so-called *Nachal’nyj svod* (Primary Compilation), see Новгородская первая летопись старшего и младшего изводов, ed. Arsenii N. Nasonov (Moskva, 1950), pp. 130–31.

28 Новгородская первая летопись, p. 131.

29 A. A. Pichkhadze, V. A. Romadanovskaia and E. K. Romadanovskaia, “Жития княгини Ольги, варяжских мучеников и князя Владимира в
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30 For discussion of this, see, in addition to Lukin and Vvedenskii, Adolf Stender-Petersen, “The Varangians & The Cave Monastery,” in Varangica, Adolf Stender-Petersen (Aarhus, 1953), pp. 139–50.

31 “идеже и нынѣ церкви есть святою мученикоу Турова, и тьи бысть прьвыи ходатаи нашемоу спасению,” Pichkhadze, Romodanovskaia and Romodanovskaia, “Жития княгини Ольги, варяжских мучеников и князя Владимира,” pp. 305–6. That is the version in the earliest versions of the St. Vladimir’s Prologue Life; this is discussed by Aleksei Shakhmatov, “Как назывался первый русский святой мученик?” Известия императорской академии наук 6, no. 9 (1907): 261–64. Based on this and other observations by Shakhmatov and Stanisław Roźniecki, Stender-Petersen also discussed the possible link between this the church of the Holy Martyr Tur or Tury and the mention s.a. 1146 in the Ipatievskiaia Chronicle of a “Turova bozhnitsa (chapel),” Stender-Petersen, “The Varangians & The Cave Monastery,” pp. 142–44, also referred to by Lukin.

32 Other interpretations have been suggested. These are discussed in Lukin, “Сказание о варягах-мучениках,” pp. 82–84.

33 At the time, the baptismal name was often, if not always, chosen so that it began with the same letter as the given name: Ol’ga/Helga–Elena/Helena; Vladimir–Vasilii; Ingegerd–Irina etc.

34 This and the fact that the Prologue Life, although clearly textually linked to the chronicle version of their martyrdom, does not not include the story of the church on the site of the Varangian’s house, made Pavel Lukin suggest that the chronicle text and the extant Prologue Life both depended on a lost Life, which he tentatively dated to the 1070–1090s, Lukin, “Сказание о варягах-мучениках,” pp. 91–96.

The additions include first of all the largest by far of all the tales, the *Life of St. Feodosii Pecherskii* (tale 8) by Nestor, who became a monk in the Caves Monastery between 1074 and 1078. This tale is immediately followed by an account of the translation of St. Feodosii’s relics in 1091, also attributed to Nestor. While in the monastery Nestor also composed an early Life of the murdered sons of Vladimir Sviatoslavich, Boris and Gleb, and some scholars also link Nestor to the compilation of the *Povest’ Vremennykh let*.

There are several references in the *Paterikon* to a now lost Life of Antonii (d. 1073), who was the first monk to settle in a cave on the later site of the monastery. In his first letter to Polikarp Bishop Simon also refers to a, likewise lost, Old Rostov Chronicle. The prominent linguist and founder of modern chronicle research, Aleksei Shakmatov, in his time (1907–1908) argued that Polikarp had at his disposal a lost Chronicle of the Caves Monastery that was also used when the *Povest’ Vremennykh let* was compiled in the monastery ca. 1110. For the *Paterikon*, Polikarp, and Simon, see Lidiia A. Ol’shevskaiia’s three articles, “Патерик киевского печерского,” “Поликарп,” and “Симон” in Словарь книжников и книжности древней Руси XI—первая половина XIV в. (Leningrad, 1987), pp. 308–13, 370–73, 392–96. They are all available on http://pushkinskijdom.ru/Default.aspx?tabid=2048.


Simon lists fifteen bishops by name and tells Polikarp that if he wants to know more he can take a look in the *Old Rostov Chronicle*, which will bring the number to more than thirty; “after them [those mentioned in the Chronicle] and to us [Simon] sinful it will, I think, be almost fifty.” This calculation suggests that the Old Rostov Chronicle must be dated to around the middle of the twelfth century. Simon’s purpose with such an array of successful monks must be to show Polikarp what a privilege it was for him to be a monk in a such a glorious monastery; however, it is difficult to see why this display of ecclesiastic success should not rather stimulate Polikarp’s ambition to become one of their kind.


(1015) to be “the sole native saints of Kievan Rus’” in the eleventh and the twelfth centuries (p. 74). This view has spilled over into Haki Antonsson and Ildar H. Garipzanov, eds., Saints and Their Lives on the Periphery: Veneration of Saints in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe (ca. 1000–1200) (Turnhout, 2010), where Boris and Gleb are repeatedly claimed to be “the first native [or “indigenous”] saints of Rus’ by several contributors: the editors in Introduction, pp. 9–10; Monica White, “Byzantine Saints in Rus’ and the Cult of Boris and Gleb,” p. 105; and Ildar H. Garipzanov, “Novgorod and the Veneration of Saints in Eleventh-Century Rus’: A Comparative View,” p. 117. Whereas our two Varangian saints fail to be mentioned.


44 This is mentioned in the Povest’ vremennykh let s.a. 1024, “Лаврентьевская летопись,” cols. 148–49.
45 “Киево-Печерский патерик,” p. 296.
46 “Киево-Печерский патерик,” p. 298.
47 “Киево-Печерский патерик,” p. 300.
48 “Киево-Печерский патерик,” p. 304.
49 “Киево-Печерский патерик,” p. 306.