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The Emergence of the Muscovite Claims to the Byzantine-Kievan “Imperial Inheritance”

JAROSLAW PELENSKI

The development of the official Muscovite claims to the “Kievan inheritance” based on the uninterrupted dynastic continuity of the Rurikides, on the Kiev—(Suzdal’-)-Vladimir—Moscow *translatio* theory, and on traditional patrimonial law—a development which began in the second half of the fifteenth century, or more specifically over a period from 1454 to 1504¹—received a major new conceptual impetus and underwent a qualitative ideological transformation during the reign of Grand Prince Vasilij III (1505-1533), or, to be more precise, in the second and third decades of the sixteenth century.

These first two phases of the formulation of Muscovite claims to Kievan Rus’ coincided with the first two phases of a protracted, three-centuries-long conflict between Muscovy and Poland-Lithuania for the lands of Old Rus’. The first phase extended from 1449 to 1485, and resulted in the annexation of two Great Russian states—Great Novgorod and the Grand Principality of Tver’—by Muscovy. The second phase covered the years 1487-1537, in the course of which five major wars were waged (1487-1494; 1500-1503; 1507-1508; 1512-1522; 1534-1537) and Muscovy was able to conquer not only Great Russian border areas, but also Belorussian territories and some lands of Ukrainian Rus’.²

¹ For a discussion of these claims, see J. Pelenski, “The Origins of the Official Muscovite Claims to the ‘Kievan Inheritance,’” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* (hereafter *HUS*), 1, no. 1 (March, 1977): 29-52. The image of Kiev in Muscovite official and semi-official sources of the 1550s and 1560s has been analyzed in J. Pelenski, *Russia and Kazan: Conquest and Imperial Ideology (1438-1560s)* (The Hague and Paris, 1974), pp. 113-17.

² An analysis of this contest in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is presented in my unpublished study entitled “The Contest between Muscovite Russia and Poland-Lithuania for the Lands of Old Rus’ (1450s-1580s).” For a discussion of Polish claims to Kiev and the whole land of Rus’ in connection with the incorporation of the Ukrainian lands into Crown Poland in 1569, see J. Pelenski, “The Incorporation of the Ukrainian Lands into Crown Poland (1969): Socio-material Interest and Ideology — A Reexamination,” in

The first of the two phases in the development of Muscovite pretensions to the Kievan heritage can be divided into three stages. The first stage of their articulation coincided with the Muscovite ideological awakening of the 1450s and 1460s, following the Council of Florence (1438-39) and the fall of Constantinople (1453). It was reflected particularly in the *Vita* of Dmitrij Ivanovič [Donskoj], in which the concept of direct and uninterrupted dynastic continuity from the Kievan ruler Vladimir I to the aforesaid Muscovite grand prince was developed in official Muscovite thought for the first time. During the second stage, which belonged to the early 1470s, the editors of the official Muscovite Codex of 1472 not only integrated this *Vita* into their work, but also formulated their own version of the dynastic *translatio* theory from Kiev through Suzdal'-Vladimir to Muscovy. The third stage can be dated to the period from 1493 to 1504, when the Muscovite court formulated its claims to all of Rus' and, specifically, to Kiev in its struggle against the Jagiellonian dual monarchy.³

The conceptual impetus and the qualitative ideological transformation of the official Muscovite claims were reflected in the legendary accounts about the transfer of gifts, insignia, and imperial crown of Monomax [Constantine IX Monomachus] to Volodymyr/Vladimir Vsevolodovič Monomax of Old (Kievan) Rus' and the correlated forgery about the enhancement of the latter's status to that of an empire. In a clearly integrated form, the two interrelated ideological claims are attested first in the texts of the *Poslanie Spiridona-Savvy* (*Poslanie*) and somewhat later in the official *Skazanie o velikix knjazex vladimerskix velikia Rusija* (*Skazanie*). The *Poslanie* was written by Spiridon-Savva, a Russian cleric of Tver' who had a rather checkered ecclesiastical and publicistic career.⁴ He was first mentioned in Russian chronicles in an entry for the year 1476, where it was stated that he had come to Lithuania from Constantinople, where he had been appointed Metropolitan of Lithuania.

American Contributions to the Seventh International Congress of Slavists, Warsaw, 21-27 August 1973, vol. 3 (The Hague and Paris, 1973), pp. 19-52; and idem, "Inkorporacja ukraińskich ziem dawnej Rusi do Korony w 1569 roku: Ideologia i korzyści -- próba nowego spojrzenia," *Przegląd Historyczny* 65, no. 2 (1974): 243-62.

³ Pelenski, "Origins," pp. 45-52.

⁴ For an account of Spiridon-Savva's life, see R. P. Dmitrieva, *Skazanie o knjaz'jax vladimirskix* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1955), pp. 73-81. The latter work also contains the text editions of the *Poslanie* and the *Skazanie* provided by Dmitrieva (pp. 159-70 and 171-78). Two additional studies on the texts in question by Dmitrieva should be mentioned in this context: "O nekotoryx istočnikax 'Poslanija' Spiridona-Savvy," *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoj literatury* (hereafter *TODRL*), 13 (1957): 440-45, and "K istorii sozdaniija 'Skazanija o knjaz'jax vladimirskix,'" *TODRL* 17 (1961): 342-47.

Spiridon-Savva was not well received by King Kazimierz Jagiellończyk, and a Muscovite chronicle under the year 1482 mentioned that he was imprisoned by the Lithuanian authorities as a suspect individual and was referred to as a “devil.” The date of his reported arrest coincided with the Sack of Kiev of 1482, which was carried out by a Tatar army from the Crimea under the command of Khan Mengli Girey at the instigation of the Muscovite Grand Prince Ivan III.⁵ Following his incarceration Spiridon-Savva apparently made his way to Muscovy, where he was received no better, since Ivan III had his own metropolitan and Spiridon-Savva’s claims to the Metropolitanate of Rus’ were obviously inconvenient to the Muscovite political and ecclesiastical authorities. For all these reasons he was confined to the Ferapontov Monastery, apparently sometime in the early 1490s, and lived there in 1503. During his stay at the Ferapontov Monastery he was involved in literary activities. He referred once to his age in the *Poslanie*, stating that he was ninety-one years old, but the date of his death is unknown.

The *Poslanie* contains a number of legends with loaded ideological content, such as the fictitious genealogical tale about the origins of Russian rulers from the Roman Emperor (Caesar) Augustus, the invented account concerning Monomax’s gifts and regalia mentioned above, and a partially faked and politically humiliating genealogical tale regarding the origins of the Lithuanian rulers. According to its internal evidence, the *Poslanie* was composed during the reign of Vasilij III—in the opinion of I. N. Ždanov before 1523, which R. P. Dmitrieva narrowed to the years 1511-1521.⁶ The *Poslanie* was apparently written at the request of the Muscovite authorities and then reedited into the official *Skazanie*, the earliest recension of which was compiled in the late 1520s or early 1530s, but before 1533.⁷

While there has been no major disagreement in scholarship about the literary history of the *Poslanie* and the *Skazanie* or about the latter’s extraordinary career in official Muscovite political thought during the rest of the sixteenth century,⁸ differences of opinion have

⁵ For an analysis of Muscovite sources pertaining to this event, confer J. Pelenski, “The Sack of Kiev in 1482 in Contemporary Muscovite Chronicle Writing,” *Eucharisterion: Essays presented to Omeljan Pritsak*, = *HUS* 3-4 (1979-80), pt. 2:638-49.

⁶ I. N. Ždanov, *Russkij bylevoj epos* (St. Petersburg, 1895), especially the chapter “Povesti o Vavilone i ‘Skazanie o knjaz’jax vladimirskix””; Dmitrieva, *Skazanie*, pp. 81-82.

⁷ Dmitrieva, *Skazanie*, pp. 91-109; idem, “K istorii sozdanija ‘Skazanija o knjaz’jax vladimirskix,” *TODRL* 17 (1961): 342-47.

⁸ Dmitrieva, *Skazanie*, pp. 111-51. For a discussion of the influence of the *Skazanie* on the *Kazanskaja istorija* or the *Kazanskij letopisec*, and the relevant ideological implications,

emerged concerning the dating and possible authorship of the individual components of the two texts and, in particular, of the genealogical tale about the Russian rulers as descendants of Caesar Augustus and the related account about Monomax's gifts and regalia. Dmitrieva dated the tale and the account as integral parts of the *Poslanie* and attributed their authorship to Spiridon-Savva. The late A. A. Zimin treated them as separate and original works and connected their composition with the coronation of Dmitrij Ivanovič, the grandson of Ivan III, which took place in 1498.⁹ More recently A. L. Gol'dberg has redated the interrelated accounts to a later period, the 1510s and early 1520s, that is, into the same period as did Dmitrieva. He questioned her attribution of authorship, however, and suggested, instead, that the writer was a "secular" individual, a Muscovite diplomat or a court official, someone like Dmitrij Gerasimov, for example.¹⁰ Whereas Gol'dberg has established one case of correlation between the official diplomatic records and the genealogical tale, specifically in the case of the so-called Prussian towns of Gdańsk, Toruń, Marburg, and Xvojnica,¹¹ his attribution of the entire tale remains less convincing than that of Dmitrieva.

The two versions of the account of Monomax's gifts and regalia included in the *Poslanie* and the *Skazanie* read as follows:

Poslanie

And in the fourth generation from the Grand Prince Rurik was the Grand Prince Vladimir, who enlightened the Russian land with holy baptism, and who was called in holy baptism Vasilij.

Skazanie

In the fourth generation after Grand Prince Rurik came Prince Vladimir, who enlightened the Russian land with holy baptism in the year 6496 [988]. And in the fourth generation after

see Pelenski, *Russia and Kazan*, pp. 106-111. The genealogical tale about the ancestry of the Russian rulers going back to Caesar Augustus, as incorporated into the *Poslanie* and the *Skazanie* and used by Muscovite diplomacy in Russo-Polish relations, became a subject of political satire in the writings of Polish Renaissance authors, including Jan Kochanowski ("Czwartynasty potomek rzymskiego cesarza / Augusta; któż wie, gdzie wziął tego kronikarza!") [Jan Kochanowski, *Jezda do Moskwy* (1583) in *Dziela polskie*, 2 vols., (Warsaw, 1976), 2: 137].

⁹ A. A. Zimin, review of R. P. Dmitrieva, *Skazanie o knjaz'jax vladimirskix*, in *Istoričeskij Arxiv*, 1956, no. 3, pp. 236-37; idem, "Antičnye motivy v russkoj publicistike konca XV v.," in *Feodal'naja Rossija vo vsemirno-istoričeskom processe* (Moscow, 1972), pp. 129-38.

¹⁰ A. L. Gol'dberg, "K istorii rasskaza o potomkax Avgusta i o darax Monomaxa," *TODRL* 30 (1976): 204-216, especially 210-11, and R. P. Dmitrieva's response restating her position, "O tekstologičeskoj zavisimosti meždu raznymi vidami rasskaza o potomkax Avgusta i o darax Monomaxa," *TODRL* 30 (1976): 217-30.

¹¹ Gol'dberg, "K istorii rasskaza," p. 208.

And in the fourth generation after him was the Grand Prince Vladimir Vsevolodovič. Taking counsel with his princes, dignitaries, and boyars, he said: "I am the most recent of all those who reigned before me and held in their hands the banners of the scepter of Great Russia as Grand Prince Oleg went [forth] and took from Constantinople, the New Rome, tribute from each inhabitant, and came back in good health; and then Grand Prince Svjatoslav Igorevič, called the Nimble One (*Legky*), went forth in galleys (*v galiaxx*) with 2700 men, exacted a heavy tribute from the city of Constantine, and returned to his fatherland, the Kievan land, and died. I am the heir of my grandfathers and of my father Vsevolod Jaroslavič and the inheritor of the same honor from God. And I seek advice from thee, princes of my palace, and boyars, and *voevody*, and all the Christ-loving host under thee; the name of the life-giving Trinity may arise with the power of thy bravery, by God's will, under our command; what counsel do thou give me?" His princes, boyars, and *voevody* answered the Grand Prince Vladimir Vsevolodovič, saying: "The heart of the Tsar is in God's hands [cf. Prov. 21:1], as it is written, and as for us, we are under thy will, who art our ruler after God." Grand Prince Vladimir gathers his highly experienced and wise *voevody* and establishes captains over the various forces—chiliarchs, centurions, and *pjadesjatniki* over the various ranks of forces, and having gathered together many thousands of warriors, sent them to Car'grad in Thrace; and they captured it to a great extent and returned with many riches, in great health. And so much for this. At that time, in the year 1045, Rome apostacized, and Pope Formos fell away

Grand Prince Vladimir came his great-grandson Grand Prince Vladimir Vsevolodovič Monomax. And when he reigned in the Grand Principality of Kiev, he began to take counsel with his princes, boyars, and dignitaries, and said: "I am the most recent of all those who reigned before me and held in their hands the banners of the scepter of Great Russia, as Grand Prince Oleg went [forth] and exacted from Constantinople heavy tribute for all his host, and came back in good health; and then Grand Prince Svjatoslav Igorevič went [forth] and exacted heavy tribute from Constantinople. And I am by God's grace the heir of my ancestors and of my father Grand Prince Vsevolod Jaroslavič and the inheritor of the same honor from God. Now I seek advice from thee, princes of my palace, and boyars and *voevody*, and all the Christ-loving host under thee; the name of the life-giving Trinity may arise with the power of thy bravery, by God's will, under our command; what counsel do thou give me?" His princes, boyars, and *voevody* answered the Grand Prince Vladimir Vsevolodovič: "The heart of the Tsar is in God's hands [cf. Prov. 21:1], as we are under thy will." Grand Prince Vladimir gathered the highly experienced and wise *voevody* and established captains over the various forces—chiliarchs, centurions, and *pjadesjatniki* over the various ranks of forces—and gathered many thousands of warriors, and sent them to Car'grad in the Thracian province; and they captured most of it and returned with many riches. At that time the pious Emperor Constantine was in Constantinople, and he waged war against the Persians and Latins. And he took wise and imperial counsel and sent his envoys to Grand Prince Vladimir Vsevolodovič: Neophytos,

from the faith. Tsar Constantine Monomax was much saddened by such things; a council gathered on the tsar's advice and on the blessing of the most reverend Kir Larius [Michael I Kerularios, Patriarch of Constantinople], and urgent letters were sent to the other patriarchs: Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch. And these envoys soon returned, together with the envoys of those patriarchs, with their letters and with the advice concerning things spiritual. And the most reverend ecumenical Patriarch Kir Larius and the Christ-loving Tsar Constantine, called Monomax, deliberated, with the advice of the ecumenical council of the four patriarchs and those metropolitans and bishops under them, and the lower ranks even to the priests, clerks, and sub-clerks, and they removed the pope's name from the registers [*iz paralipomena*] of the church altars of the four ecumenical patriarchs. And from that time even unto the present day they "rome" about, having fallen away from the Orthodox faith, and [therefore] they acquired the name of "romers," and for this the pope's name is not mentioned in the church prayers from the four ecumenical altars of the patriarchs. From that time this prating Formos is not called pope, but an apostate from our Orthodox faith, which we received from the evangelical message of our Lord Jesus Christ, the son of God, the word of God, and thanks to the holy teachings of his disciples and the tradition of the seven ecumenical councils. This accursed Formos divided the substance of the life-giving Trinity and introduced to the Latin people a fourth person in the Godhead, babbling that the Holy Spirit emanates from the son. But we, the adherents of Orthodoxy, believe in the eternity of the Father

Metropolitan of Ephesus, and with him two bishops of Malatia[?] [militin'ska] and Mitylene[?] [mitilin'ska], and Antipas, strategus [stratiga] of Antioch, and the general of Jerusalem, Eustathius, and his other nobles. And from around his neck he took the life-giving cross made from the same life-giving tree on which the Almighty Christ was crucified. He took from his head the imperial crown and placed it on a golden platter. He ordered the sardonyx vessel to be brought, from which Augustus the Roman Caesar had rejoiced [drinking], and a stole, which he wore on his shoulders, and a censer forged of Arabian gold, and many other imperial gifts. And he gave them to Metropolitan Neophytos and the bishops and the noble envoys, and sent them to Grand Prince Vladimir Vsevolodovič, pleading with him and saying: "Accept from us, O God-loving, Pious Prince, these honorable gifts [*ot načatka večnyx let tvoego rodstva pokolen'ja car'skij žrebij*][?], for thy glory and honor and for the coronation of thy free and autocratic empire. And by means of this, our envoys will entreat thee, and we ask for thy grace, peace, and love; and may God's churches be without strife, and may all the Orthodox remain in peace under the power of thy empire and thy free autocracy of Great Russia; may thou be called from this time onward a God-crowned Tsar, crowned with the imperial crown by the hand of the Most Reverend Metropolitan Neophytos and the bishops." And from that time Grand Prince Vladimir Vsevolodovič was called Monomax and Tsar of Great Russia. And after that for a long time to come he remained in peace and love with Emperor Constantine. And from that time on with the imperial crown, which the great Emperor of the Greeks

and the co-eternity of his Son, his word, and the Holy Spirit who shares the throne emanating from the immaculate bosom of the Father; the Trinity is con-substantial: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And so much about this; let us return to the matter at hand. The God-loving Tsar Constantine Monomax took counsel and sent envoys to Grand Prince Vladimir Vsevolodovič: Neophytos, Metropolitan of Ephesus in Asia, and with him two bishops, of Malatia[?] (*militinska*) and of Mitylene (*mitilinska*), and the strategus (*stratiga*) of Antioch, Augustalius of Alexandria, and a general of Jerusalem, Eustathius. And from around his neck he took a life-giving cross from the same life-giving tree on which the Almighty Christ was crucified. He took from his head the imperial crown and placed it on a golden platter. He ordered that the sardonyx vessel be brought from which Augustus, the Roman Caesar, had rejoiced [drinking], and a stole, which he wore on his own shoulders, and a censer forged of Arabian gold, and myrrh made with many fragrant flowers of the Indian land, and frankincense [*ot zlata aravijska troma smešenie imat*], and many other gifts. And he gave them to Metropolitan Neophytos and the bishops and his noble retainers, and sent them to Grand Prince Vladimir Vsevolodovič. "Accept from us, O God-loving, pious prince, these honorable gifts [*ot načatok večnyx let tvoego rodstva pokolenia*] for thy glory and honor and for the coronation of thy free and autocratic empire. And by means of this our envoys will entreat thee, and we ask of thy grace, peace and love;

Constantine Monomax sent, the grand princes of Vladimir were crowned when they were established in the Grand Principality of Russia.¹²

¹² Dmitrieva, *Skazanie*, pp. 175-78. The English translation of this crucial passage first appeared in my study *Russia and Kazan*, pp. 107-109.

may God's churches be without strife, and all the Orthodox remain in peace under the power of our empire and thy free autocracy of Great Russia; may thou be called from this time onward a God-crowned Tsar, crowned with the imperial crown by the hand of the Most Reverend Metropolitan Neophytos and the bishops." And from that time Grand Prince Vladimir Vsevolodovič was called Monomax and Tsar of Great Russia. And from that time with the imperial crown which the great Tsar of the Greeks Constantine Monomax sent him, all the Grand Princes of Vladimir were crowned, when they were established in the Grand Principality of Russia, just as the free autocrat and Tsar of Great Russia Vasilij Ivanovič, the twelfth descendant from Grand Prince Vladimir Monomax, and from Grand Prince Rurik the twentieth descendant, together with his brothers Ivanovič and Andreevič.¹³

The account of Monomax's gifts and regalia, as well as the genealogy of the rulers of Rus' from the Roman emperor (Caesar) Augustus, are obvious historical fabrications, similar to other medieval and early modern historical legends written with the purpose of proving a distinguished lineage for the ruling dynasty and with the aim of elevating the status of a state in the community of other states. There is no evidence of any direct historical relationship between the two Monomaxes, since Volodymyr/Vladimir Monomax of Rus' (Grand Prince of Kiev, 1113-1125) was born in 1053, while Constantine Monomax died in 1055. However, Volodymyr/Vladimir Monomax's father, Vsevolod Jaroslavič (1030-1093), was apparently married to a Greek woman from the Byzantine imperial family, and Volodymyr/Vladimir was the offspring of this marriage (*ot carice gr'kyne*). Some historians have speculated that the Greek mother of the Kievan Monomax may have been a daughter of Constantine Monomax.¹⁴

¹³ Dmitrieva, *Skazanie*, pp. 162-65.

¹⁴ *The Russian Primary Chronicle (Laurentian Text)*, trans. and ed. S.H. Cross and O.P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), pp. 142, 263, fn. 192. Consult also

Furthermore, the inclusion of the imperial dynastic name Monomax into Volodymyr/Vladimir Monomax's own name represents a problem which has not been satisfactorily resolved and requires further investigation.¹⁵ Evidently no actual relations or transfer of regalia between the two Monomaxes could have taken place.

With one major exception, the differences between the account in the more archaic *Poslanie* and the *Skazanie* are rather insignificant. The major exception is the *Poslanie*'s treatment of the first great schism in Christianity in 1054, which resulted in its breakup into the Catholic and Orthodox versions of the Christian faith, a treatment included in the middle section of the *Poslanie* account.¹⁶ Otherwise, both accounts contain all the essential "historical events" and the relevant ideological claims. For instance, both give considerable prominence to the alleged campaign of Svjatoslav Igorevič against Constantinople and maintain that he exacted a "heavy tribute" from that city, although Svjatoslav never went to Constantinople but waged war against the Bulgarians. His name was known in Byzantium where he may have had some contacts. Both accounts also credit Volodymyr/Vladimir Monomax with an alleged victorious campaign against Constantinople and Thrace which supposedly resulted in great booty for the Rus'.

The most important elements of the two accounts pertain, of course, to the transfer of Constantine Monomax's gifts and regalia to Volodymyr/Vladimir Monomax of Rus', the latter's attainment of the status of the "Tsar of Great Russia," and the transformation of the Old (Kievan)

V. G. Brjusova, "K voprosu o proisxoždenii Vladimira Monomaxa," *Vizantijskij vremennik* 28 (1968):127-35.

¹⁵ The name and title Monomax appears, of course, in the *Poučenie* (Testament) of Volodymyr/Vladimir Monomax inserted in the Laurentian Codex among the entries for 1096. The dates of its writing and incorporation into the Laurentian Codex have long defied scholarly explanation (*The Russian Primary Chronicle*, Appendix I, Notes to Testament of Vladimir Monomax, p. 285, fn. 1). For the more recent Soviet commentaries, and the literature on the *Poučenie*, see D. S. Lixačev, *Velikoe nasledie* (Moscow, 1975), pp. 111-31, and D. S. Lixačev, ed., *Istorija russkoj literatury X-XVII vekov* (Moscow, 1980), pp. 96-100. Concerning the discussion of a seal attributed to Volodymyr/Vladimir Vsevolodovič and including the name Monomax, confer V. L. Janin and G. G. Litavrin, "Novye materialy o proisxoždenii Vladimira Monomaxa," D. A. Avdusin and V. L. Janin, eds., *Istoriko-arxeologičeskij sbornik* (Moscow, 1962), pp. 204-221.

¹⁶ Spiridon-Savva's discussion of the schism contains a number of obvious mistakes. For example, the schism did not occur in 1045, as Spiridon-Savva maintained, but in 1054, during the tenure of Pope Leo IX (1049 - April 1054) and not that of the alleged Pope Formos, to whom he referred. An abbreviated summary of his treatment of the 1054 schism was incorporated at the end of the first reconstructed recension of the *Skazanie*, but was completely eliminated from the work's second recension (Dmitrieva, *Skazanie*, p. 178 and pp. 185-91).

Rus' into an "empire" and a "free" (supreme and unlimited) autocracy¹⁷ already in Monomax's time, and the subsequent transmission of the Kievan ruler's title and the status of an empire first to the Grand Principality of Vladimir and then to the "Great Russia" of Muscovy.

Since I. N. Ždanov's first major scholarly treatment of the *Poslanie* and the *Skazanie*, various scholars have pointed out that those who devised the genealogical tale about the rulers of Rus'—descendants from the Roman emperor Augustus—and the related account concerning the Byzantine Monomax's gifts and regalia, as well as those who used the tale and the account in question for official ideological purposes, intended to upgrade the status of the Muscovite state by connecting it with the Roman Empire of antiquity and by claiming direct inheritance from the more recent but equally prestigious Byzantine Empire.¹⁸ Others have emphasized the national dynastic foundations of the Muscovite Rurikides as the decisive element in Muscovite state ideology, and rejected the significance of the Byzantine connection particularly as exemplified by the marriage of Ivan III to Sophia Palaeologue.¹⁹

The Muscovite ideologues and the court, or those performing services for them, were indeed not interested in stressing the most recent connection with Byzantium, since that empire was ideologically tainted by its acquiescence to the Council and Union of Florence (1438-39), for which it had appropriately been punished by the "infidel" conquest of Constantinople (1453) and by its very downfall. Late Byzantium, the "second Rome," was hardly a convenient ideological reference, then. However, the Byzantine Empire of the "middle period" of the distinguished Macedonian dynasty, to which Constantine IX Monomachus was related, could serve as a much more suitable predecessor from which historical precedents could be borrowed and with which ideological affiliations could be construed. It was the Byzantium from

¹⁷ The notions of supreme sovereignty and unlimited authority were expressed in Russian sources by the term *vol'nyj*, a paradoxical definition for the contemporary reader. Its early usage can be attested, already in the mid-fifteenth century, by no other than Iona, the first autonomous Metropolitan of Moscow, in relation to the Kazan Tatar khan, Mahmut (*Akty istoričeskie, sobrannye i izdannye Arxeografičeskoju kommissieju*, 1 (1841), nos. 67, 266, pp. 119-20, 497). Following the assumption of the title of Tsar by Ivan IV, the term was used officially by Muscovite bureaucrats and publicists.

¹⁸ Ždanov, *Russkij bylevoj epos*, pp. 62-63, 101-112.

¹⁹ G. Olšr, "Gli ultimi Rurikidi e le basi ideologiche della sovranità dello Stato Russo," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 12 (1946): 322-73.

whom Old Rus' had accepted Christianity, with whose imperial dynasty famous rulers of Old Rus' had entered into marital bonds, and who was the bulwark of Orthodox religious purity against the "perverted" Latins. Spiridon-Savva's incorporation of the account of the religious schism of 1054 was not entirely accidental, although Muscovite authorities decided to exclude it from the later official version. The Muscovite court preferred to put greater emphasis on military conquests and exaction of tribute which fitted into its own and the traditional theory of law by conquest.²⁰ Old Byzantium was treated both as a highly respected empire of antiquity from whom Old Rus' had inherited imperial regalia and as an indispensable link in the chain of Muscovite imperial claims. Without Byzantium, Russian imperial claims could hardly have been advanced.

However, the Muscovite court also became convinced that the advocacy of Muscovite imperial claims would be fortified by a native imperial tradition. With the help of Russian, but non-Muscovite, publicists, who readily offered their services to the rising Muscovite ruler, the Muscovite court promulgated the theory of the "Kievan imperial inheritance," for which there was no objective historical evidence, just as there was no substantiation for the assertion that the grand princes of Vladimir were crowned with an imperial crown, or that the Grand Principality of Vladimir, a relatively insignificant territorial state in its own time, held or even aspired to the status of an empire. The evidence for a conscious preoccupation with the "Kievan imperial inheritance" in official circles in Muscovy during the first decades of the sixteenth century can be found in the writings of Filofej of Pskov, who had a very keen sense of what the Muscovite court wanted to hear. In his Epistle to Vasilij III, composed sometime after 1511 and at about the same time as the *Poslanie* of Spiridon-Savva, Filofej referred to the "blessed St. Vladimir and the great Jaroslav, the chosen of God, and other venerable saints, whose lineage has been extended to thee, emperor" in the same manner as to "the other ancient Orthodox emperors" such as the great Emperor Constantine, who in one of the copies of Filofej's Epistle was directly named as an "ancestor" of Vasilij III.²¹ Interestingly enough,

²⁰ For an analysis of the Muscovite theory of law by conquest as applied to the Khanate of Kazan, see Pelenski, *Russia and Kazan*, pp. 88-91. On the Polish theory of law by conquest with regard to Old Rus', cf. Pelenski, "Incorporation of Ukrainian Lands," pp. 38-44.

²¹ V.N. Malinin, *Starec Eleazarova Monastyrja Filofej i ego poslanija* (Kiev, 1901), *Prilozenie*, 9, pp. 51-52. For a rare earlier reference to Vladimir I as emperor ("Tsar") in the *Vita* of Dmitrij Ivanovič [Donskoj], consult Pelenski, "Origins," pp. 40-41.

Filofej's contribution to the formulation of the claim regarding the imperial status of the rulers of Old (Kievan) Rus' and the idea of the Byzantine-Kievan "imperial inheritance" was included in one publicistic work in which he began to explicate the theory of "Moscow — the third Rome."

The theory of "Kievan imperial inheritance," as well as those of Roman and Byzantine "imperial inheritances," had international and domestic implications. They served the Muscovite court not only in its struggle for the lands of Old Rus' against Poland-Lithuania, but also in its efforts to enhance the hierarchical status of its ruler not only vis-à-vis the ruler of Poland-Lithuania, its principal competitor for the lands of Old Rus', but also other rulers in both Europe and the East. It was during that period that Muscovite diplomacy scored its first, albeit temporary, success by receiving the acknowledgement of the title "tsar," or the Western "caesar" ("Kaiser"), for its ruler from a real emperor, Maximilian I, in the anti-Polish offensive alliance treaty Muscovy concluded with his empire in 1514.²² The theory of a "Kievan imperial inheritance" could serve very conveniently in efforts to strengthen the authority of the Muscovite ruler. Since a "free" autocratic empire had already existed in the "Russian" realm in the Kievan antiquity, it was only natural to continue its political traditions in Muscovite Russia and to extoll the status of her rulers in relation to their subjects. Finally, the new claim to a "Kievan imperial inheritance" represented the crowning component of the Kiev—(Suzdal'-)Vladimir—Moscow *translatio* theory and elevated it to a much more lofty "imperial" level.

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²² The best critical edition of the text of this treaty, its German translation, and a commentary were provided by G. Stökl, in L. Santifaller, ed., *1100 Jahre österreichische und europäische Geschichte* (Vienna, 1949), pp. 53-55. For the historical background of the treaty, and additional documents, cf. J. Fiedler, "Die Allianz zwischen Kaiser Maximilian I und Vasilij Ivanovič, Grossfürsten von Russland, von dem Jahre 1514," *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Classe* 43, no 2 (1863):183-289, especially 196, 197-99 and fn. 1.