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Enthronement Rituals of the Princes of Rus' (twelfth-thirteenth centuries)

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This article examines the translation, transformation, and innovation of ceremonies of inauguration from the principality of Kiev to the principality of Vladimir-Suzdal' and the city of Novgorod in the early Russian period (twelfth-thirteenth centuries). The ritual embellishment of inauguration ceremonies suggests a renewed contact between early Rus' and Byzantium.

Medieval historians have long understood the importance of rituals in communicating the sacredness of ruling offices. Ceremonies of enthronement, anointings of rulers by bishops, and the entry of a ruler into a city or a monastic complex were all meant to edify, promote, and render visible the authority of the ruler and that of the Church. In the medieval period, such ceremonies and rituals were attended with processions, liturgical invocations, and lauds that transformed the ceremonial space (usually a church) into the sacred image of heavenly Jerusalem and the ruler into a figure of the triumphant Christ (Koziol 77-103).

The literate clergy of Kievan Rus' portrayed ceremonies of inauguration in the chronicles of Rus', suggesting that such ceremonies were made visible to the laity (other princes, the people of Kiev and other polities, and foreign dignitaries) through processions to and enthronements at the church of St. Sophia in Kiev along with analogous churches in other cities, in a few solemn and infrequent events. The enthronements of new rulers represented in the chronicles of Rus' for the Kievan period (the twelfth century) differ from the highly structured ceremonies of inauguration described for the Byzantine court and from the circumscribed rituals elaborated by the Church for the Latinate kingdoms.ⁱ For example, the beginnings of reigns in the *Povest' vremennykh let* (the Russian Primary Chronicle) appear to solely denote the hereditary right of succession for the princes of Rus', and historians have largely focussed on the theoretical system(s) of succession of the Rurikid dynasty in Rus' in order to make sense of increasingly complicated configurations for the succession of Rurikid princes to the throne of Kiev.ⁱⁱ By contrast, the ritual elements of the inaugurations themselves (when they are described) have not been analysed with the attention they merit.ⁱⁱⁱ George Majeska portrays the schema of a Kievan enthronement, in comparison with a Muscovite enthronement, that of Dimitrii Ivanovich in 1498, thusly: "Prince (or Grand Prince) *blank* came to *blank* and sat (*sede*) on the throne of his forefathers" (Majeska 353-361; 355). Though not as pithy as Majeska claims, the enthronement ceremonies of early Rus' received none of the *ordines* or theoretical exegeses that defined and embellished those of Byzantium and the Latinate kingdoms (Nelson 259-283). This article will examine ceremonies of inauguration in Rus', specifically, in the North and Northeast. The progressive differentiation and elaboration of enthronement rituals in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries demonstrates a recuperation effort, of the Kievan heritage, as well as a possible Byzantine influence.

The chronicles of Rus' include details about ceremonies of inauguration. The relative consistency of the descriptions of the inaugurations of new Rurikid princes through enthronements at the church of St. Sophia in Kiev or at analogous churches in other polities suggest that such ceremonies carried a social and political value in designating a new prince and investing him with seniority (in the case of sole rule) or a higher status (in the case of co-rule with a senior prince). The representation of Church prelates, monks, notables, lay people, and foreign dignitaries as participants and witnesses to the enthronements of certain princes of Rus' suggests that the authors or compilers of the chronicles of Rus' were concerned with the externalisation of the symbols of authority for the benefit of an acquiescent public.

From this perspective, the ritual elements of the enthronement ceremony would represent, as Maurice Godelier writes “these are ‘total social acts’ in the sense that they summarise and express—therefore they compound in an isolated moment, and in a specific social setting—the principles of social organisation that underlie a way of life.” (des ‘faits sociaux totaux’ en ce sens qu’ils résument et expriment—donc totalisent en un moment exceptionnel, en une configuration particulière de la vie sociale—les principes de l’organisation qui sous-tend ce mode de vie;^{iv} *my translation*, Godelier 66). Thus, an enthronement in Rus' would externalise the principles of succession in Rus', as the visual translation of an ideology made available to the interpretation and appropriation by its designated public.

In the Kievan section of the Hypatian Chronicle (known as the Kievan Chronicle), which covers the events of the twelfth century, the enthronements of the princes of Rus' are described in greater detail than in the Vladimirian-Suzdalian section of the Laurentian Chronicle (known as the Suzdalian Chronicle). The descriptions of these enthronements are especially vivid regarding the two enthronements that take place in the city of Vladimir and one enthronement that takes place in the city of Novgorod. These successor cities and rivals to Kiev demonstrate a clear determination to recuperate the ritual spaces (churches, monasteries, and processional routes) of the city of Kiev. The descriptions of enthronements in these cities are further examples of the shift of power from the principality of Kiev to Vladimir-Suzdal' in the twelfth century. The enthronements that take place under the auspices of the princes of Vladimir-Suzdal' are elaborated in the narrative of the Kievan Chronicle in marked geographic shifts (away from the politico-spiritual centre of Kiev) and rhetorical amplifications for the enthronements of Andrei Bogoliubskii in Vladimir (1158), Mikhailko Iurevich in Vladimir (1176), and Mstislav Rostislavich in Novgorod (1178), which prefigure the grandiose description of the enthronement (as co-ruler) of Constantine Vsevolodovich (the son of Vsevolod *Bolshoe Gnezdo*) in Vladimir (1206) as it is described in the Suzdalian section of the Laurentian Chronicle.

Beginning in the mid-twelfth century, the Suzdalian principality becomes increasingly prominent as a rival to Kiev and as a successor to the city of Iaroslav the Wise (ruled Kiev, 1019-1054), which had been built to mirror the topographic and spiritual landscape of Constantinople. The princes, Andrei Bogoliubskii (son of Iurii Dolgorukii) and his successor, Vsevolod *Bolshoe Gnezdo* (Big Nest), engaged

in a programme of expansion that reflected the good fortunes of the north-east of Rus' in the twelfth century (Franklin and Shepard 356-366). Thus, it is unsurprising that the enthronement of Andrei Bogoliubskii, especially as it is presented in the Hypatian Chronicle, should focus on the philanthropic oeuvre of the Prince: the construction of a church dedicated to the Holy Mother of God, the completion of Iurii Dolgorukii's church dedicated to the Holy Saviour, and the endowment of other churches and monasteries in Vladimir-Suzdal':

In that same year, all the people of Rostov, Suzdal', and Vladimir, having conferred, took Andrei (Bogoliubskii), Iurii's eldest son, and they set him (to rule) on his father's throne in Rostov and in Suzdal' and in Vladimir, since he was greatly loved by all for the very great number of good deeds which he had accomplished for the Lord and for all who were under him. Moreover, upon the death of his father, he created a great memorial. He decorated churches and established monasteries and completed the stone church of the Holy Saviour, which his father had previously begun. Prince Andrei himself laid the foundation of the stone Church of the Holy Mother of God in the city of Vladimir in the month of April, on the eighth day, the day that is dedicated to the memory of the holy apostle Rodion, on Tuesday. And he gave it many possessions: settlements that he had purchased with tribute, and the best villages, and a tithing of his herds and one-tenth of his trade goods. He had built for the church five domes, and all the domes he decorated with gold. And he made it a bishop's seat. And he founded more (buildings) in the city of Vladimir.

(Том же лет, сдумавши Ростовци и Суждалици и Володимирци вси пояша Андрея сына Дюргева старейшаго и посадиша и на от(чи)ни столе Ростове и Суждали и Володимири, зане бе прилюбим всем за премногую его добродетель юже имевше преже к Богу и к всем сущим под ним. Тем же и по смирти отца своего велику память, створи церкви украси и монастыри постави и церковь сконца иже бе заложилъ переже отец его святого Спаса камяну. Князь же Андреи сам у Володимири заложил церковь камяну святой Богоридци месеца априля в 8 день на святого апостола Родиона в вторник. И дая и много имения и свободы купленья и с даними и села лепшая и десятины в стадах своих и торг десятии. Сверши же церковь 5 верхов и все верхы золотом украси и створи в ней епископью и город Володимер болии заложил; *my translation, PSRL 1 328; PSRL 2 490-1.*)

The beginning of the reign of Andrei Bogoliubskii, *sub anno* 1158, is unremarkable insofar as the ceremony of enthronement is concerned. The Hypatian and Laurentian Chronicles have the same source for the narrative of the event, as the texts relating the event are very nearly identical. Andrei Bogoliubskii is accepted by the people of Rostov, Suzdal', and Vladimir, who confer upon him the right to rule and place him on his father's throne (Hurwitz 12-22). The focus of this episode, and the main event of the enthronement, is the construction of the church dedicated to the Holy Mother of God, constructed between 1158 and 1160, which would later become the central church in Vladimir. This

church followed the example of its homologue at the Kievan Caves Monastery and was the first of a series of edifices that would culminate in the erection of Vladimir-on-the-Kliazma. As Limonov writes, this form of cultural expansion through the mass construction of churches and monasteries promoted Vladimir to an (almost) equal rank and, certainly, as a rival to the principality of Kiev.^v This observation gains greater veracity when, in the 1160's, Andrei Bogoliubskii sought ecclesiastical emancipation from Kiev. Although, in spite of his great prominence and high rank, Andrei Bogoliubskii had to accept the negative verdict of Constantinople, Rus' being an ecclesiastical province of the patriarchate of Constantinople. In spite of this refusal by the Constantinopolitan patriarchate, the inchoate process of cultural mimesis is in clear evidence in urban planning, architecture, and the pattern of cultural patronage begun by Iurii Dolgorukii and continued by his son and, especially, by his son's successors.

The enthronement of Mikhaïlko (accompanied by Vsevolod Iurevich) at Vladimir follows a very common pattern (like that previously seen in Kiev) and is only remarkable in that the accounts provided by the Hypatian and Laurentian Chronicle differ slightly. In this instance, the Laurentian Chronicle provides several panegyric amplifications that are omitted in the Hypatian Chronicle:

Then Mikhaïlko and Vsevolod went into Vladimir with glory and great honour, leading the prisoners before them. God had shown the princes not to transgress the (kissing of the) Cross and to honour their elder brother, and not to heed evil men who do not want peace between brothers. Then the people of Vladimir, seeing their princes, went to meet them with crosses and with happiness and with great honour. And Mikhaïlko went into the city, to the church of the Holy Mother of God, and sat on the throne of his father and grandfather on the fifteenth day of the month of June. That day, a Sunday [...] there was great happiness in the city of Vladimir on behalf of the Grand Prince of all the land of Rostov. Let us wonder at the miracle of the great and glorious Mother of God, at how she saved her city from a great scourge.

(Михалко же победи полкъ [с братом своимъ Всеволодом] в день неделный и поеха в Володимерь с частью и с славою великою. Дружине его [и Всеволожи] и Володимерцем ведущим пред ним колодники. Богу наказавшю князии креста частнаго не преступати и старейшаго брата частити а злых человек не слушати иже не хотят межи братею добра. Выидоша же с кресты противу Михалку и брату его Всеволоду игумени и попове и вси люды и веха в город к святей Богородици июня месеца в 15 день. А в день неделный [...] И бысть радодсть велика в Володимери граде видяще у собе великого князя всея Ростовьскыя земли. Мы же да подивимся чудному и великому и преславному матере Божя како заступи град свои от великих бед; *my translation, PSRL 1 602; PSRL 2 375-376.*)

This panegyric excursus is found at the end of the narrative featured in the Laurentian Chronicle as an excursus on the rejoicing of the people of Vladimir-Rostov-Suzdal' at the enthronement of the new prince and the salutary aspect of the Mother of God as the protector of cities. This epithet is a

reference to the Akathistos hymn, which Kondakov connected to Psalm 46:5, in honour of the Virgin where she is described as the “unbreakable wall” thereby promoting the intercession of the Virgin for the safety and defence of the city (Kondakov 72). The representation of the Virgin *orans*, the main figure in the apse mosaic at the Kievan St. Sophia, was interpreted by art historians as a Constantinopolitan theme based on the church of the Blachernae and the Virgin *Blachernitissa*. This iconographic theme of the Mother of God veiled in white is connected with the worship of the *Pokrov* (the feast of the Intercession of the veil) based on a vision of the Mother of God that occurred at that same Constantinopolitan church and is recounted in the “Life of St. Andrew the Fool” (Kondakov, 59-61; Rydén, 62-82). Thus, the innovation at this second inauguration of a prince of Vladimir-Suzdal’ is the localisation of the enthronement at a major princely foundation, mostly likely, based on a Kievan, and, by extension, a Constantinopolitan model. The appropriation of Byzantine religious imagery and the intercession of the protectress of the city of Kiev for the enthronement of Mikhailko further demonstrates the rhetorical representation of a shift in politico-spiritual authority to Vladimir-Suzdal’.

Even after the elaboration of a spiritual nexus for the princes of Vladimir-Suzdal’, the 1176 enthronement of Mikhailko remains modest. The narrative of the ceremonial portion—the description of the physical space and topography of the enthronement—is limited to the salutation of the new ruler, the presentation of the “life-giving Cross” (which Mikhailko kisses), and an implied procession to the church of the Mother of God where the official enthronement (the act of “sitting on the throne”) takes place. As on many occasions in the Kievan Chronicle, there is no mention of the presence of the clergy. The omission of the clergy possibly reflects the increasingly autocratic actions of the princes of Vladimir-Suzdal’ in trying to promote their own candidates to the metropolitanate (Franklin, *Sermons*, li-lvii, xlix-li; Franklin and Shepard, 362-363) or even trying (and failing) to establish a metropolitanate in Vladimir to circumvent the spiritual authority of Kiev (Franklin, “Diplomacy and ideology,” 145-150). The election and elevation of a prince through his own authority as secular leader (military and civil) and as spiritual leader (through his role as patron) may further reflect a changing pattern in the ideology of rulership in Rus’ at the end of the twelfth century.

Based on these observations, it is entirely unremarkable that the description of Vsevolod *Bolshoe Gnezdo’s* 1206 crowning of his son, Constantine in Novgorod should see the role of the Church so greatly restricted. In the episode presented below, the main message is the prerogative of the Grand Prince to confirm the right of seniority and to confer co-rulership in his own principality without the assent of the Church or of the people of Novgorod:

His father presented him with the true Cross and a sword, saying: “This (the Cross) will be your protector and helper, and the sword your menace (threat) and safeguard, which I hand over to you that you may protect your people from enemies.” And he said: “My son Constantine, God has given you seniority over all your brothers, and Novgorod the Great possesses the seniority to rule over all Rus’ lands, in your name and to your glory. But, it was God who gave you seniority among all your brothers,

and in all Rus' lands. And I give you seniority; go to your city." He kissed and dismissed him.

(И да ему отец крестъ частны и мечъ. Река се: "ти буди схраньник и помощник а мечъ прещенье и опасенье иже ныне даю ти пасти люди своя от противных," и рече: "сыну мои Костянтине на тебе Бог положил переже стареишиньство во всеи братьи твоеи а Новгород Великыи стареишиньство иматъ княженью во всеи Руской земли по имени твоем. Тако и хвала твоя не токмо Бог положил на тебе стареишиньство в братьи твоеи но и в всеи Руской земли. И язъ ти даю стареишиньство, поеди в свои город." И целовав и отпусти"; *my translation, PSRL* 1 417-421; 418-419.)

The description of the ceremony itself does not differ greatly from those of the princes of Kiev featured in the Kievan Chronicle: the princes enter the city of Novgorod, they are welcomed, there is rejoicing, and a procession. The main ritual innovation in the narrative is the passing of a sword, handed by Vsevolod to his son, as a symbol of his rule. The sword is given along with a Cross, marking the double aspect of the prince's authority over his land. The sword as a symbolic accoutrement does not appear in any of the narratives of either the *Povest' vremennykh let* (the Russian Primary Chronicle) or the Kievan portion of the Hypatian Chronicle. The sword does not figure in the narrative of the corresponding period in the Galician-Volhynian Chronicle either. In effect, it is only mentioned in the thirteenth century portion of the Suzdalian section of the Laurentian Chronicle.

The Laurentian Chronicle, which, at this point, presents a different narrative from the Hypatian Chronicle (which shifts to the events that took place in Galicia-Volhynia) endows the rite with a more venerable aspect by citing Biblical passages that can be described as a veritable disquisition on the position of the ruler within the celestial *oikoumene* as well as his favoured status with the Lord who granted him his kingdom and rule. In effect, the series of Biblical quotations (Math. 25:4, 35, 36, 40; Ps. 111-112:5; Ps. 40-41:1, 2; II Cor. 9:6) encapsulate the general *topoi* related to kingship including the anointment ritual that is feature of the elevation of Israelite kings:

As the prophet David says: (Ps. 117-118:24): "This is the day which the Lord hath made, let us rejoice and be glad in it." And then he says (Ps. 20-21: 1-5): "O Lord, the Tsar shall have joy in thy strength and he greatly rejoiced in thy salvation. Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withheld the request of his mouth. Thou hast placed a crown of precious stones on his head; he asked life of thee, and thou gavest him length of days for ever and ever." And then (Ps. 2:7-9): "The Lord said unto me, 'thou art My son, today I have begotten thee; ask of Me, and I will give thee the people of thy inheritance, and their possessions will reach the end of the earth; and thou shalt govern them with a rod of iron.'" And the Apostle says (Rom. 13:1-4): "World powers are ordained by God. We must fear the powers in order not to do evil and in order not to obtain afterwards punishment from them." And concerning this he

says: “He is the servant (minister) of God, an avenger, for wrath to him that doeth evil. If thou wilt have no fear of the powers, do that which is good, and thou shalt be praised by them. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain.”

(Якоже рече пророк Давид (Ps. 117-118:24) “съ день иже створи Господ взрадуиemia и взвеселимся во нь.” И паки рече (Ps. 20-21: 1-5) “Господи силою твоею взвеселится цесарь и о спасньи твоим взрадуется зело желанье сердца его дал ему еси и хотенья уст его неси его лишил положил еси на главе его венець от камени драгаго живота проси у тебе и дал ему еси долготу дени в веки веку.” И паки (Ps. 2:7-9) “Господь рече к мне ‘син мои еси ты и азъ данасъ подих тя. Проси от мене и дам ти язык достоянья твоего и одержанье твое до конца земли и упасеши я палицею железною.” И паки апостоль рече (Rom. 13:1-4) “власти мирьскыя от Бога вчинены суть но власти боящися да зла не створим да не от них. паки и муку приемем и того ради глаголатъ ‘Богу слуга есть мьстя злодеем хощещи ли ся власти не бояти злаго не твори и похвалить тя аще ли зло творишь боися не бо без ума мечь носить”; *my translation with Dvornik’s biblical citations (120), PSRL 1 417-418.*)

This passage is the first instance in any of the chronicles where the ruler is exalted in this fashion. Effectively, such exaltations usually occur at the deaths and funeral processions of defunct princes of Rus’. The exaltation encapsulates a series of *topoi* related to rulership: the role of the ruler as the defender of his people, as philanthropist, and true benefactor (εὐεργέτης) to his subjects, all of which are *topoi* that are found in Byzantine rhetoric based on the Hellenistic *topoi* that were used to elevate the successors of Alexander the Great (Dennis 131-141). Although the terms used to acclaim the new prince of Novgorod are not those that would have necessarily been used to acclaim a Byzantine emperor,^{vi} they encompass the spirit of secular power as it was understood not only in Byzantium, but also in the wider medieval world (Ullmann esp. 86-96, 111-113).

As in Kiev, the new ruler is presented to the people of the city where he is meant to rule and to its clergy. What is more prominent in Suzdal’ is the notion that the clergy had no specific role in the confirmation of the prince nor in his elevation. The clergy is not attributed any responsibility in articulating the prince’s right to rule through any type of ritual assent. The representation provided by the Suzdalian portion of the Laurentian Chronicle (which was both written and later compiled by monks in Rus’) is that of an autocratic appointment of a co-ruler made solely by a senior prince within the framework of Biblical rhetoric and a Christian symbolic landscape.

The ceremonies of inauguration represented in the chronicles of Rus’ offer a unified vision for the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The political and spiritual dominance of the principality of Kiev, the city planned according to a Constantinopolitan model by Iaroslav the Wise, is demonstrated through the internecine conflicts that erupted over competing claims to the throne of Kiev. It is also evidenced

by the sacred topography and pattern of cultural patronage that the princes of Vladimir-Suzdal' undertook for the city of Vladimir. Furthermore, it is evidenced by the chronicle narratives for enthronements taking place in Vladimir-Suzdal' that strictly adhere to a Kievan ceremonial template. However, the shift in geographic focus in the Suzdalian Chronicle demonstrates competing, possibly Byzantine,^{vii} influences for the ideological imperative behind the enthronements of the princes of Vladimir-Suzdal'. This dynamic is present in the 1206 enthronement of Constantine Vsevolodovich at Novgorod. The ritual innovations for the early thirteenth century enthronement at Novgorod, fallen under the authority of princes of Vladimir-Suzdal', represent the culmination of the process begun in the twelfth century by the senior princes of Vladimir. The recuperation of a Kievan politico-spiritual and ritual heritage is enhanced by the representation of the Prince of Vladimir as autocrat within the legitimising rhetorical framework of the Christian faith. Thus, Vladimir-Suzdal' is represented as both a successor to the principality of Kiev, through mimesis, and as an autonomous principality, through ritual innovation.

Notes

ⁱ For the 10th and 11th centuries, the main sources are: Novgorod I Chronicle (*NPL*) in *PSRL* 3 and the *Povest' vremennykh let*. The main source for the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Rus' is the Hypatian Chronicle, which is the base text for this study. The text used is that of the *PSRL* 2, cols. 264-715. The much shorter Laurentian Chronicle is also employed where it adds to or differs from the text of the Hypatian Chronicle, see: *PSRL* 1, cols. 289-437.

ⁱⁱ See: Solov'ev, 203-15; Gorshkov, col. 837; Stokes, 268-275; Pritsak, 25, 28, 582; Dimnik, 369-386; Shields Kollmann, 377-387; Shchavlev, 68-78. These are only some of the articles amongst the historical works that discuss enthronements or *stolonasledie* that in terms of the succession rules and struggles that consumed the Rurikids.

ⁱⁱⁱ See: Dvornik, 73-121. See also: Dimnik in *The Dynasty of Chernigov, 1146-1246* provides some analysis of enthronements in Kiev as ceremonies. Chichurov in his *Politicheskaia ideologiia* provides the ideological basis for understanding the ceremony within the context of 11th and 12th century political thought in Rus'. The latest studies on the topic are: Plotnikova, 3-12; and Androshchuk, 5-10.

^{iv} See also: De Coppet (ed.), *Understanding Rituals* where the idea of "total social acts" implies the public representation of rituals in order to incarnate the fundamental principles of a social order. However, as Adler and Turner have described in their respective studies, sometimes a private ritual, a "coutume secrète", can produce the same effect and represent a "real" incarnation of authority and the basis for social order while excluding wider participation. Adler's study describes the effect of such rituals and their "usage magico-réaliste ou magico-ritualiste" as potently perpetuating the idea of monarchy amongst the Moundang and promoting a royal lineage, see: Adler, 381. Turner also notes cumulative uses of ritual elements as exemplifying a single principle through their repetition, thus rendering "total social acts" unproductive and unnecessary, see: Turner, *The Ritual Process*.

^v Limonov, 104-106; Franklin and Shepard, 359. The desire to promote a Constantinopolitan framework for the city is evident in its urban planning as well as the establishment, by Andrei Bogoliubskii, of a new feast dedicated to the Intercession of the Veil (*pokrov*), to which Andrei Bogoliubskii's church of the Intercession on the Nerl was dedicated, Rydén, 62-82. On the church patronage of the princes of Vladimir, see: Brumfield, 44-56. Compare the description of the church dedicated to the Holy Mother of God with Kiev's St. Sophia, which included five aisles and apses instead of three, a gallery, staircase access towers on three sides and thirteen domes. See: Powstenko, 109-112.

^{vi} Note that the role of the clergy at ceremonies of inauguration was not as imperative in Byzantium as in the Latinate kingdoms. In Byzantium, the patriarch's role was limited to the blessing of the imperial vestments, imperial diadem (which the emperor placed on his own head and on that of his chosen co-emperor), liturgical prayers for the new ruler, followed by acclamations.

^{vii} On the renewed Byzantine influence on Vladimir-Suzdal', see: White, 351-362.

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