

Culture of Kyivan Rus'

1. Christianity.
2. Architecture.
3. Art.
4. Literature.



1. Kyivan Rus'

Kyivan Rus', the first organized state of the eastern Slavs, was located on the lands of modern Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus, was ruled by members of the Rurik dynasty and centered around the city of Kyiv from the mid-ninth century to 1240.



The Rulers

Knyaz (Slavic royal title usually translated to “Prince” or “Duke”) Svyatoslav the Brave, Knjaz Volodymyr the Great and Knjaz Yaroslav the Wise were the rulers of Kyivan Rus’ who made the most significant contribution to the development of culture of the state.



Sviatoslav the Brave

Sviatoslav (935-972) was famous for his incessant and successful campaigns in the east and south, which precipitated the collapse of two great powers of Eastern Europe – Khazaria and the First Bulgarian Empire.

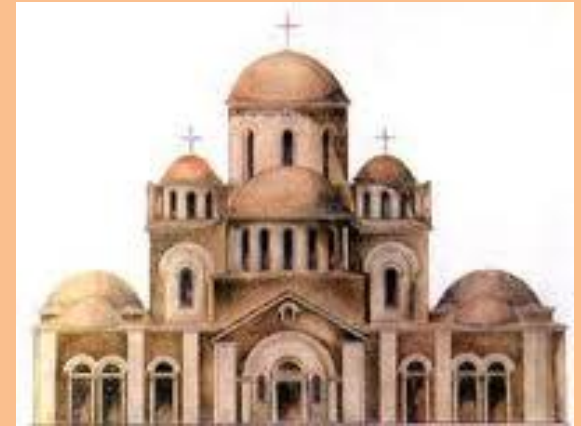


Volodymyr the Great

Originally a pagan, Volodymyr (958-1015) converted to Christianity in 988, and proceeded to baptize all of Kyivan Rus'. Under his rule Kyivan Rus raised to the height of its powers and became the largest state in Europe.

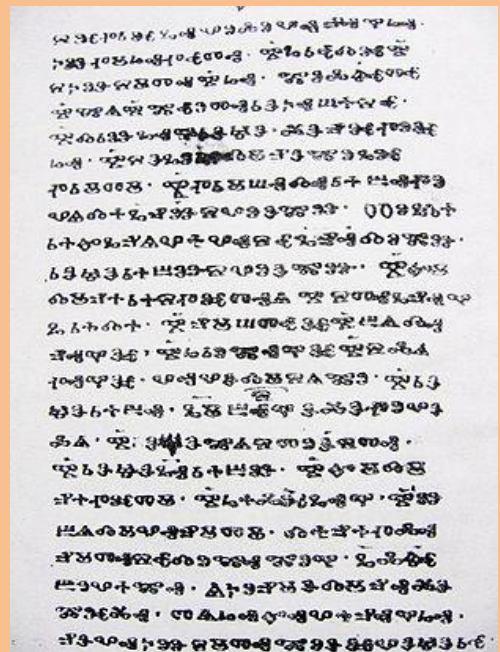


Knyaz Volodymir reigned for many years as a pagan, setting up altars, shrines, and sacrifices to Perun and other figures of the Slavic pantheon. But in 988, some say to secure a political alliance with the Byzantine empire, he converted to Eastern Orthodox Christianity, tore down the old pagan monuments and erected many churches and cathedrals.





Christianity had many good points for Slavs' culture. It led to literacy because the Byzantine Greek brothers Cyril and Methodius created for Kyivan Rus special Glagolitic alphabet. New religion put the Slavs into the Byzantine and European cultural orbit.



Yaroslav the Wise

Under Yaroslav (978-1054) the codification of legal customs and princely enactments was begun, and this work served as the basis for a law code called the Rus'ka Pravda ('Rus' Justice'). During his lengthy reign, Rus' reached the zenith of its cultural flowering and military power.



The first monasteries in Rus' were formally established during Yaroslav's reign. He founded a primary school and library at the Saint Sophia Cathedral and sponsored the translation of Greek and other texts into Church Slavonic, the copying of many books, and the compilation of a chronicle.



Kyivan Cave Monastery (Kyivo-Pecherska Lavra).

An Orthodox monastery in Kyiv. It was founded by Saint Anthony of the Caves in 1051 near Kyiv. Many of the monks were from the educated, upper strata, and the monastery soon became the largest religious and cultural center in Kyivan Rus'.





2. Architecture of Kyivan Rus'.

Features:



stone and brickwork with buried row; 5-nave cathedrals



churches with many cupolas



towers with the circular stairs



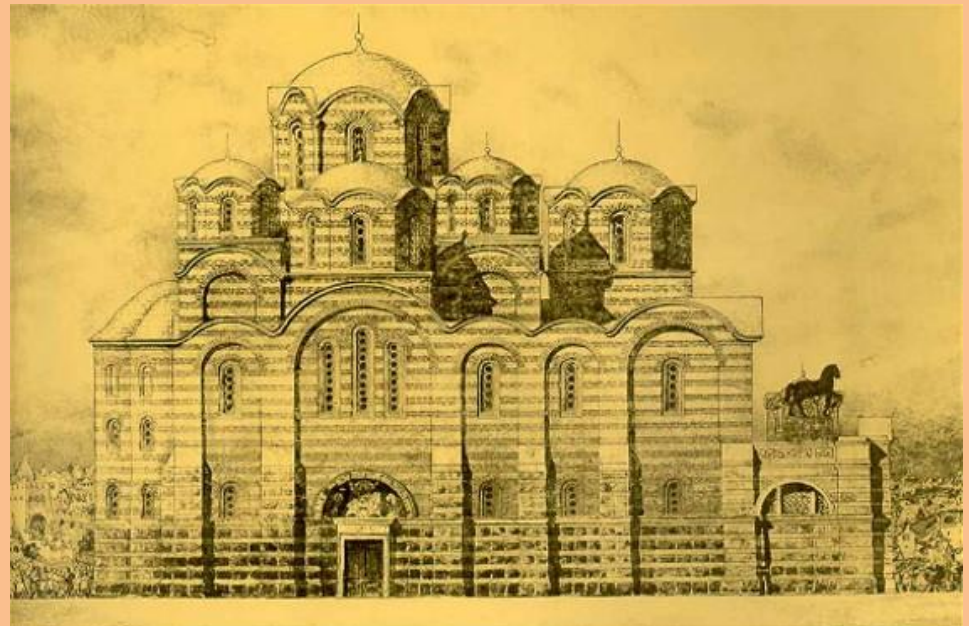
open galleries



magnificent decoration (mosaics, frescoes etc.)

The most famous buildings of the period were:

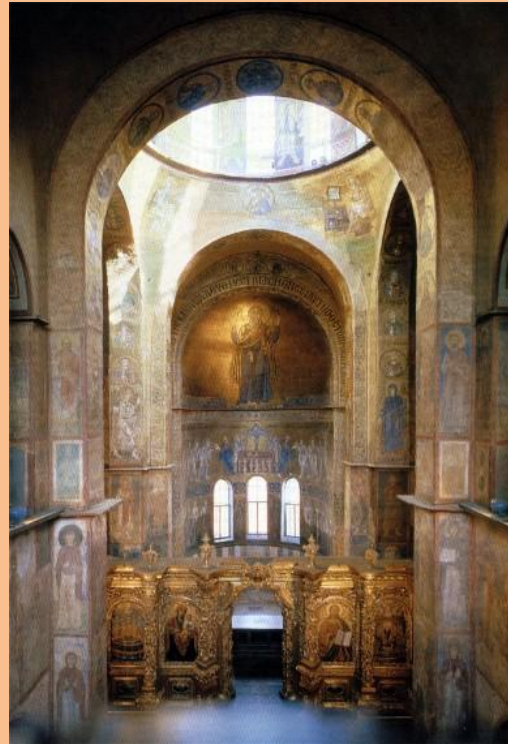
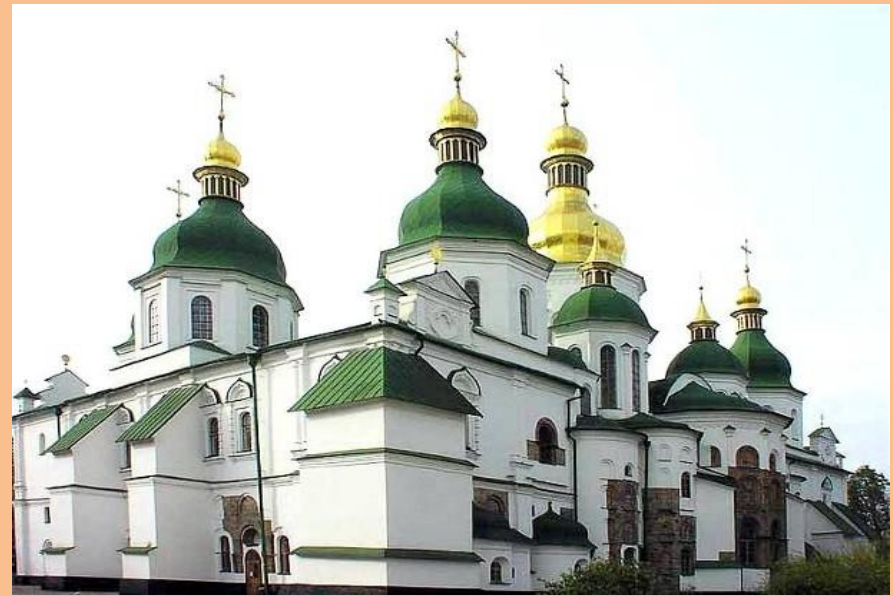
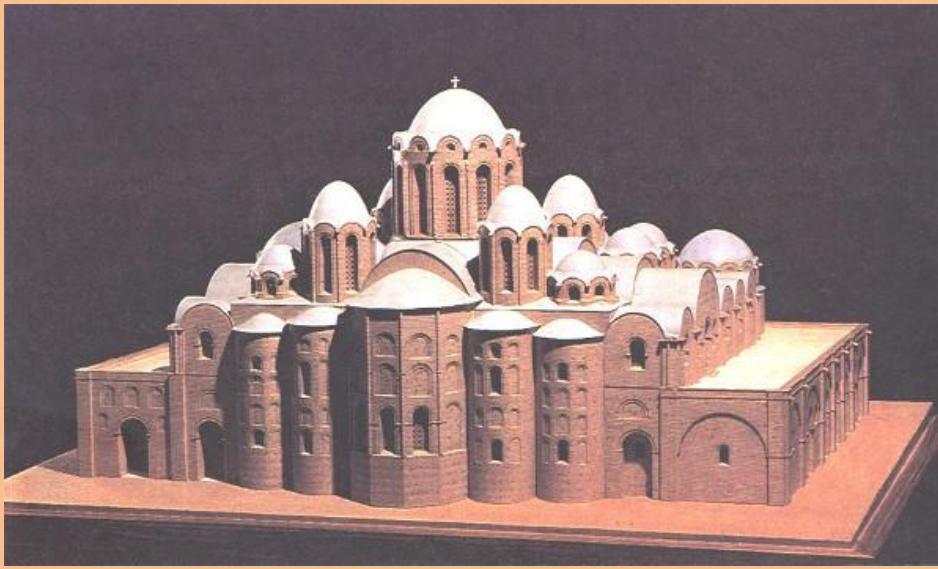
The tenth-century Church of the Tithes in Kyiv was the first cult building to be made of stone. The earliest Kyivan churches were built and decorated with frescoes and mosaics by Byzantine masters.



The Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv

The great example of an early church of Kyivan Rus' was the thirteen-domed Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv (1037–54), built by Yaroslav the Wise. Much of its exterior has been altered with time, extending over the area and eventually acquiring 25 domes.







The Golden Gates of Kyiv

The Golden Gates of Kyiv (1037) is a major landmark of the Ancient Kyiv and historic gateway in the ancient city fortress. The passing part of the gates was about 40 feet high and 20 feet wide. For almost half of millennium they served as the Triumph Arch of the city and were considered the major pride of the city's residents.

The Golden Gates of Kyiv



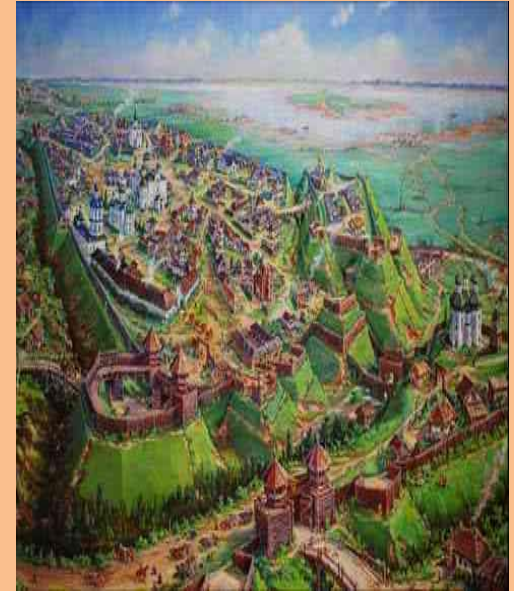
The Spas'kyi Cathedral in Chernihiv

The Spas'kyi Cathedral was founded by knyaz Mstyslav the Brave in 1036.

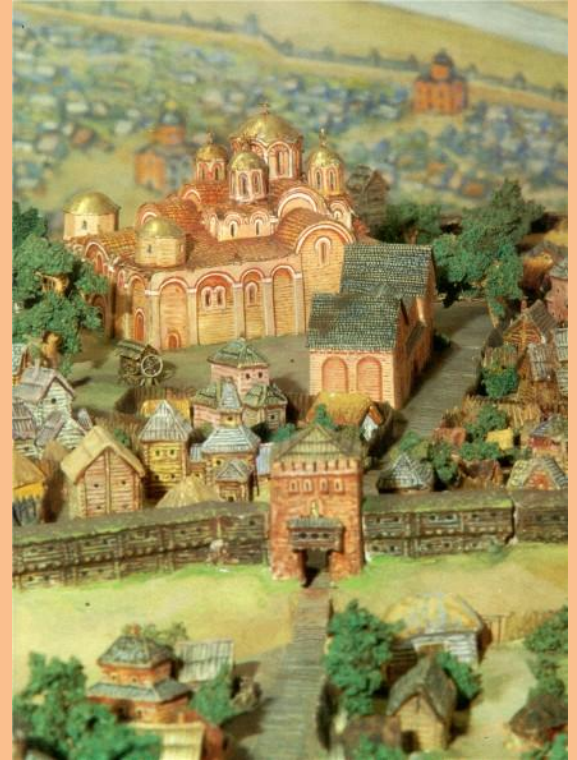


The Chernihiv Dytynets'

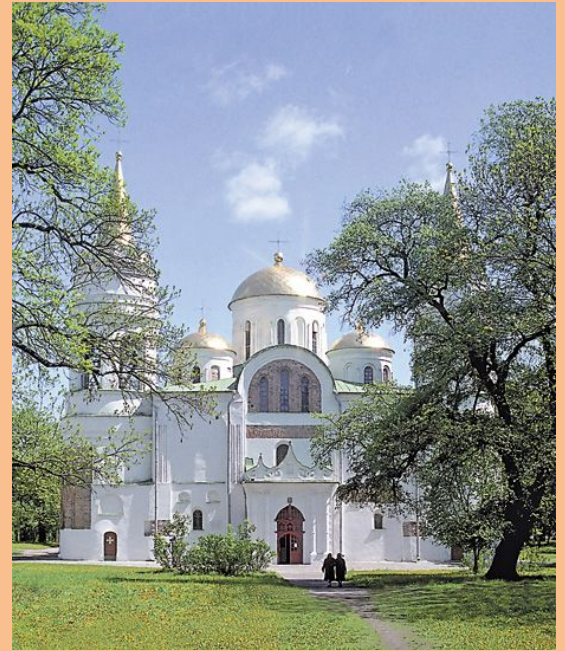
Ancient Chernihiv Dytynets' (Citadel) is situated the crossroads of main roads. Such a disposition of Dytynets' provided the most favorable conditions for controlling the neighborhoods and visual contacts with them. That's why the territory of Dytynets' was the most convenient place for settlement in ancient times.



The excavations opened the remains of 4 temples, a terem (a tower-like building for prince's family), 2 front gates, dozens of dwellings, manufacturing and household buildings were studied, the remains of fortifications were explored, 7 jewelry treasures were found etc.



In its time of prosperity –
the first half of the 13th
century, total length of
Dytynets' (Citadel)
fortifications was 1600
meters and the square –
16 ha.



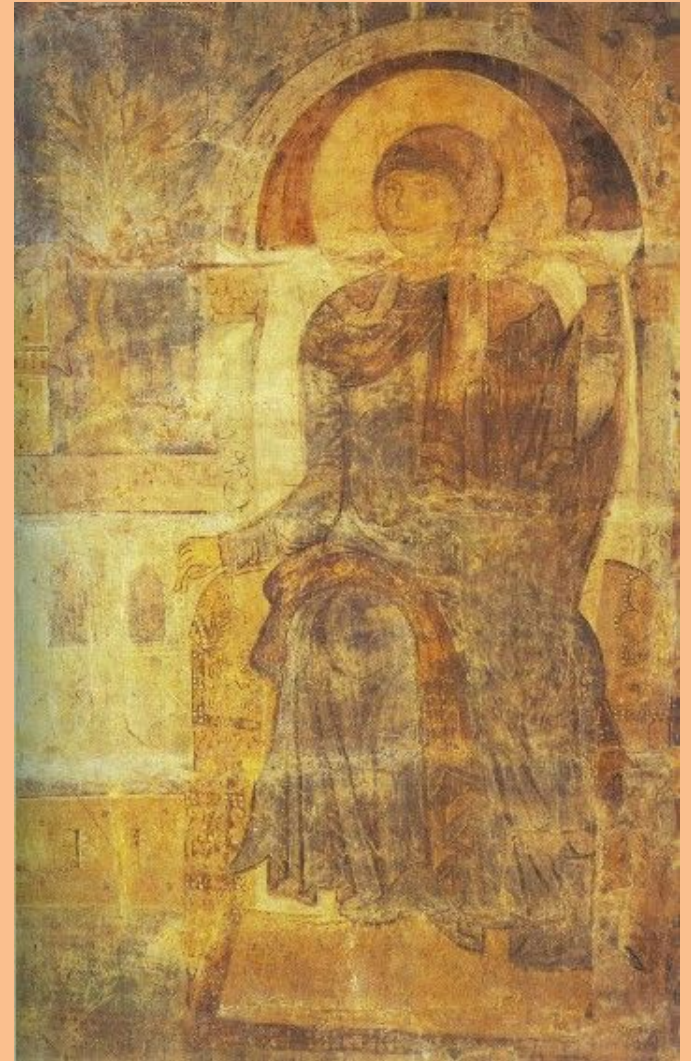
3. Art of Kyivan Rus'. Fresco painting

Fresco painting. A method of painting on freshly plastered walls with powdered pigments that are resistant to the erosive action of lime. Before the colors are applied to the wet plaster the main lines of the composition are usually traced on the preceding coat. The painting is very durable and is applied to both interior and exterior walls.

Frescos of the Transfiguration Church in Berestove

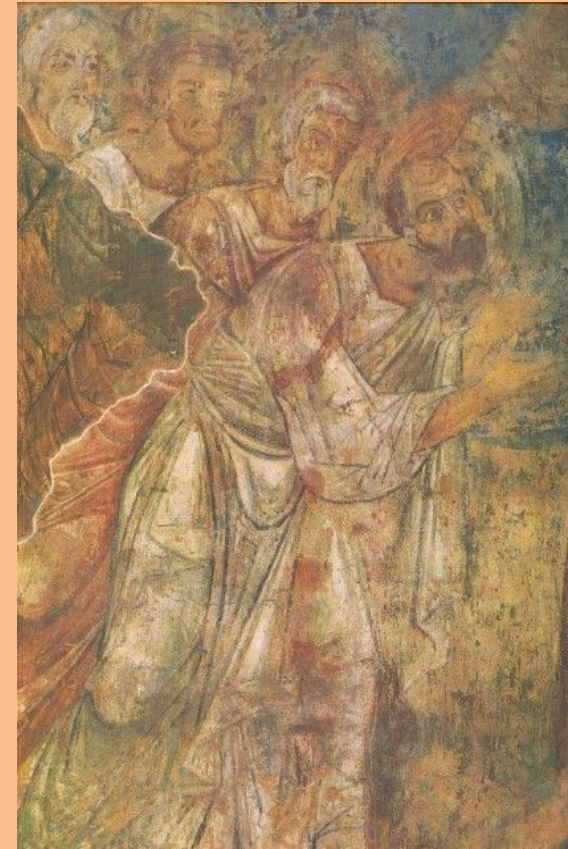


In the Kyivan Rus' the fresco was the principal method of decorating church interiors. Mosaics adorned churches only in the 11th and 12th centuries and were limited to the central part, while frescoes covered all the side apses, vaults, columns and walls of the side naves, and sometimes even the arch supports, galleries, niches, and external portals.



The most famous examples

The most famous examples of this decorative system are Saint Sophia Cathedral (1037) and the Cathedral of Saint Mychailo's Golden-Domed Monastery (mid-12th century, destroyed by the Soviets in 1936, then rebuilt in independent Ukraine in the late 1990s) in Kyiv. A different Kyiv school of fresco painting was represented by the painters who decorated the Dormition Cathedral of the Kyivan Cave Monastery.



The frescoes of Saint Sophia Cathedral

The frescoes of Saint Sophia Cathedral are painted on a two-layer plaster base 1.5–2 cm thick and strengthened with chopped straw. The cool blue, white, purple, and green colors predominate in both the frescoes and mosaics, creating a reverential mood.



In the main apse, near the mosaic of Orante, frescoes depict various scenes from the life of the Mother of God and her parents; the main events in the life of Christ appear in the central nave. Another series of frescoes, dealing with the Christological cycle, adorns the second level.



Of particular interest are the secular frescoes: episodes from court life, hippodrome events, hunting, musicians, acrobats are depicted in the two towers; there are figural portraits of Yaroslav the Wise and his children in the main nave.

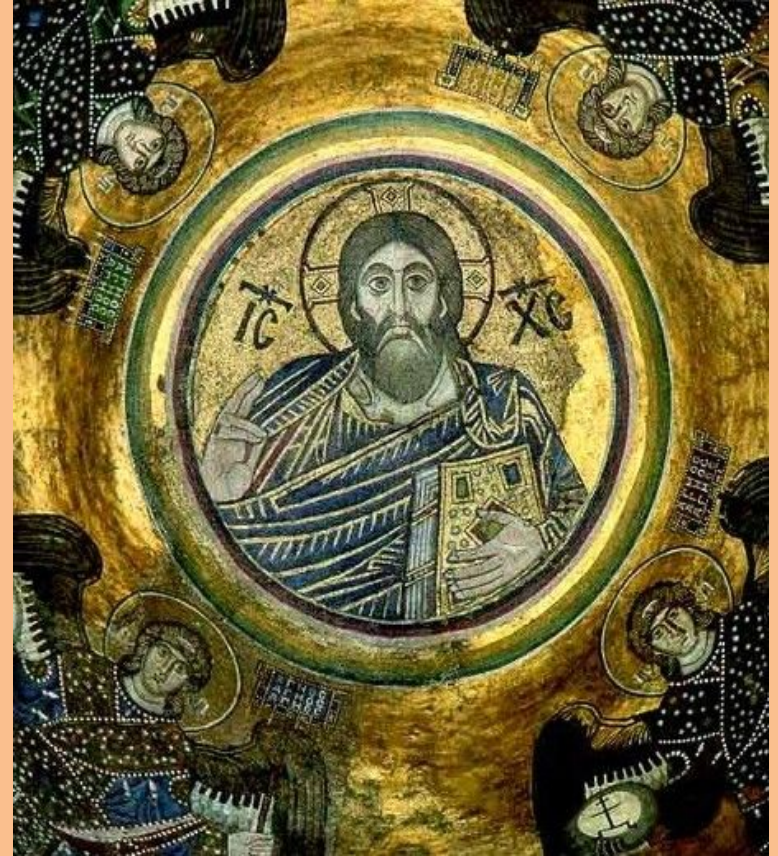


Fragments of frescoes from the following Chernihiv cathedrals have also been preserved: the Cathedral of the Transfiguration (early 11th-century depiction of Saint Teklia), the Saints Borys and Hlib Cathedral, the Church of Good Friday. Traces of frescoes were found in Pereiaslav during the excavations of Saint Michael's Cathedral (built 1089), in the Church of the Savior in Posada, and in other churches.

Mosaic

A method of wall and floor decoration in which small pieces of cut stone, glass, and, occasionally, ceramic or other imperishable materials are set into plaster, cement, or waterproof mastic.

Mosaic was used to decorate various Rus' churches and palaces in the 10th to 12th centuries, including the Church of the Tithes, the Saint Sophia Cathedral, the the Dormition Cathedral of the Kyivan Cave Monastery, and Saint Michael's Church.



The mosaics of Saint Michael's Church of the Saint Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery show the development of a Kyivan style that is more dynamic and compositionally less schematic than that of the Saint Sophia mosaics.



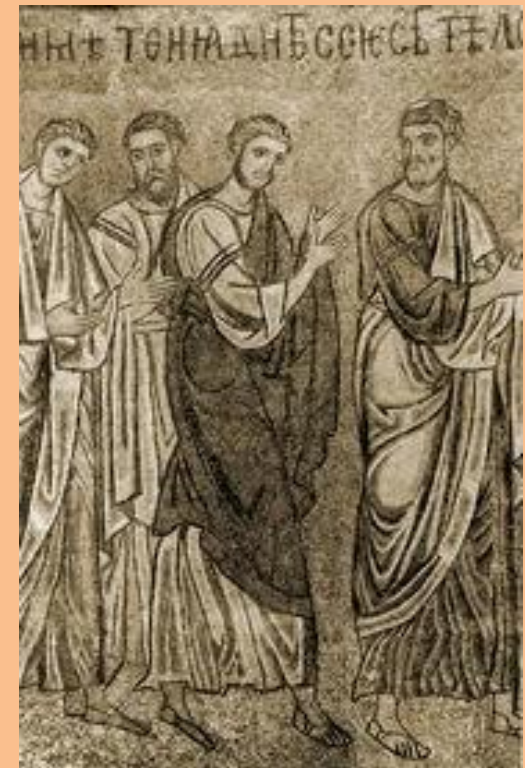
The Eucharist

In the rendering of the Eucharist in the Saint Sophia Cathedral the Apostles are uniformly posed and robed in subdued tones. In the Saint Michael's version of this subject the Apostles are depicted in a variety of more naturalistic poses and garbed in bright colors. The mosaics of Saint Michael's tend to be linear in style, whereas the Saint Sophia mosaics are modeled with subtle variations in tone and hue.

The Eucharist (the Saint Sophia Cathedral)

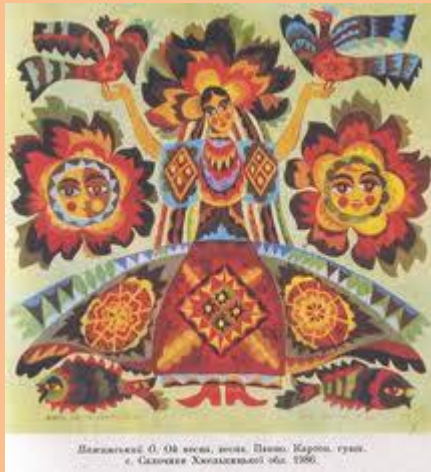


The Eucharist (the Saint Michael Cathedral)



4. Literature of Kyivan Rus'

The development of original literature in Kyivan Rus' was based on both a rich folk oral tradition and a dissemination of translated religious texts.



Didactic literature

The oldest and most noted Kyivan didactic work is '□ A Sermon on Law and Grace' (1050) by Metropolitan Ilarion, the first native metropolitan of Kyiv. A more subtle form of didactic literature can be found in the numerous hagiographic works, describing the lives of saints.



Hagiography

Modeled on translated hagiographies, lives of Saint Anthony of the Caves, Saint Volodymyr the Great, Saint Princess Olha, and others were written and collected in the *'Kyivan Cave Patericon'*, the most remarkable collection of lives in the Kyivan period.



Litopysy

Also noteworthy are the early chronicles ('litopysy'), which are unique for their wealth of information and their blending of fact and fiction, written sources and eyewitness accounts.

The Ukrainian chronicles

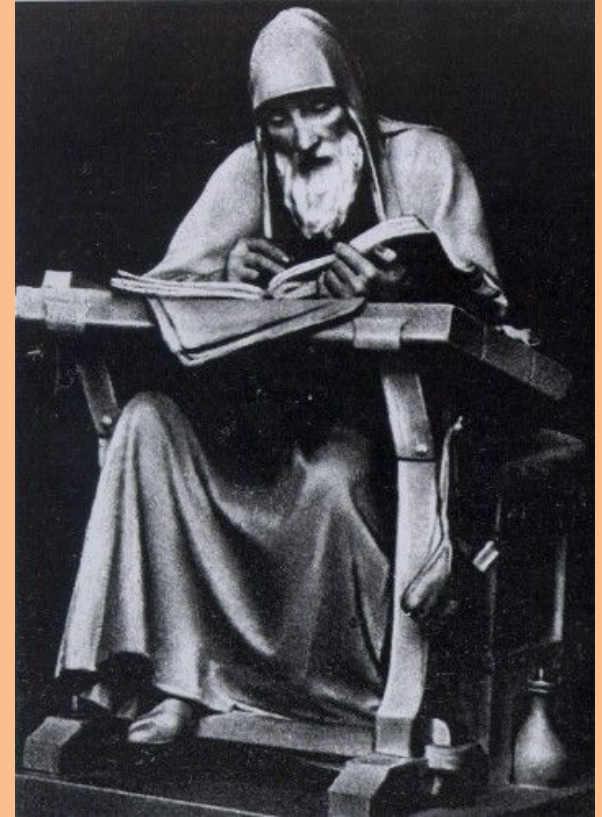
The Ukrainian chronicles are the most remarkable monuments of historical literature produced in ancient Rus'. They can be divided into three parts, **the Primary Chronicle** (up to the 12th century), **the Kyiv Chronicle** (from 1118 to 1190), and the **Galician-Volhynian Chronicle** (from the beginning of the 13th century to 1292). They were written as annual records. Besides accounts of events they contain a variety of literary materials, stories, legends, biographies etc.

The Kyiv Chronicle, and the page of Galician-Volhynian Chronicle



The Primary Chronicle

The so-called Primary Chronicle of 1097 was based on three earlier compilations (of 1037, 1073, and 1079) and became in its turn the source for *‘Povist □ vremennykh lit’*, whose authorship is traditionally attributed to the monk Nestor the Chronicler.



‘Slovo o polku Ihorevim’

The most unusual and outstanding monument of old Ukrainian literature, however, is the secular epic poem ‘*Slovo o polku Ihorevim*’ (The Tale of Ihor's Campaign, ca 1187). The epic poem of the late 12th century was written by an anonymous author.



The subject of the poem

The subject of the poem is the unsuccessful campaign mounted in the spring of 1185 by Ihor, prince of Novhorod-Syvers'kyi, against the Polovtsi. Its central theme is the fate of the Kyivan Rus'. In addressing that theme the author condemns the various princes for their feuding and their selfishness at the expense of the general good.



The poem was written in an epic lyrical style. The historical subject matter is interspersed with dreams, laments, nature's reaction to the hero's fate, monologues of princes, and other motifs and devices.



After a description of preparations for the campaign, of the three-day battle, and of Ihor's defeat the author proceeds to analyze the reasons for the decline of the Rus' land. After a description of Ihor's escape from captivity the work concludes with praise of the 'ancient princes' Ihor and Vsevolod and of the 'younger ones,' represented by Volodymyr Ihorovych.

