

The Kiev Psalter of 1397: An Analysis

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The Kiev Psalter¹, also called the Spyridon Psalter is unique. It is the only preserved Slavonic manuscript of its kind dating to the period before the fifteenth century. It is also anachronistic, produced in 1397 but illustrated in a style typical of the eleventh century. A marginal Psalter², it must have been a very valuable treasure in the medieval period as “the book of Psalms is of all books, the mother.”³ The Kiev Psalter has a straightforward past, with no real mysteries, and yet the manuscript itself is a mystery. Why were its illustrations copied from an earlier manuscript? Which manuscript served as the model? Why was it produced in Kiev, when all indications suggest that the scribe, artist and patron came from Moscow? Answers to these questions have been proposed, but they are theories only. Short of time travel, the answers will likely remain theories.

The Kiev Psalter is a luxury volume, containing over 300 colourful miniatures throughout its 229 leaves. A large book (30 cm by 24.5 cm), it has wide margins: 3 cm on the top; 6 cm on the sides; and 7 cm on the bottom. These margins are maintained throughout the manuscript and are generally filled with images and the occasional added commentary or text. The composition of the images varies from single figures to complex narratives filling the margins entirely. There is one instance where a page was reserved for an image only: the frontispiece, portraying David composing the Psalms. Another full-page image was added later, to the other side of the same folio. The rest of the images serve in conjunction with the text and are meant to be read at the same time. The text of the manuscript consists of the psalms (folios 2-205), the Odes (205-227) and a few brief liturgical texts and prayers that were added later (228-9).⁴ All of the text written in 1397 was written in a liturgical uncial script with large, illuminated initials used frequently. The original binding was replaced in the nineteenth century with green velvet panels. Unfortunately, the person who rebound the manuscript appears to have cropped the pages, as the damaged commentary on folio 197 recto would seem to indicate. In addition, folios 145 and 154-6 were replaced in the seventeenth century with

¹ Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library, Leningrad, MS F 6, Kiev, 1397

² A marginal Psalter contains its images in the margins, as opposed to frontispieces and miniatures.

³ Russian Proverb, quoted in G. Vzdornov. Commentary on the Kievan Psalter (Moscow: Iskustvo, 1978), 150.

⁴ Vzdornov. Commentary, 147.

paper pages containing no images. As of 1978, the manuscript was being kept unbound in the Leningrad Public Library.⁵

Two details contained within the manuscript itself allow modern scholars to trace some of the early history of the Kiev Psalter. It contains a colophon on folio 227 recto, identifying Bishop Mikhail as the patron and Archdeacon Spyridon as the scribe. It further states that the manuscript was produced in the city of Kiev in the year 6905, (1397 by the Gregorian Calendar). The next significant entry into the manuscript appears in the bottom margins of folios 1 verso through 13 verso. This set of 40 lines is occasionally wrapped around the images in the bottom margins, skipping on those pages where the margins are already full. Added in the sixteenth century, the inscription identifies Abraham Joseph Hlebicky, the State Treasurer of the Grand Principality of Lithuania as the manuscript's owner.⁶ He had his coat-of-arms added to the very first folio and the inscription was added to mark his donation of the manuscript to the Church of St Nicholas in the town of Vilno.⁷ The date given is 1518.⁸ Unfortunately, there does not appear to be any way to trace the Psalter's path from Kiev and Moscow to Lithuania in the period between 1397 and 1518. According to Vzdornov, there are several inscriptions in the Kiev Psalter which were written in Polish and Latin. He suggests that these indicate a long-term presence in Lithuania. Unfortunately, other than the inscription just mentioned, these are not readily apparent in the manuscript, making it difficult to agree or disagree with the commentator.

It is interesting to note that there are no other Kievan manuscripts of this same period. However, there are at least three Gospels in Moscow that Spyridon is believed to have either contributed to or produced: a 1393 Gospel,⁹ the Khitrovo Gospel,¹⁰ and the Gospel from the Cathedral of the Assumption.¹¹ Scholars generally agree that Spyridon was probably the archdeacon of the Cathedral of the Assumption in the Moscow Kremlin, and that he worked for the Metropolitan Cyprian of Moscow (1390-1407) as well as Grand Duke Vasily I (1389-1425).¹² Similarly, scholars also agree that the language used

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ modernly Vilnius

⁸ Vzdornov. *Commentary*, 147.

⁹ Leningrad Public Library, FPI 18

¹⁰ Lenin Library, Moscow, file 304, III, no. 4/m. 8654

¹¹ Moscow Krelim Armoury, no. 11056.

¹² Vzdornov. *Commentary*, 149.

in the Kiev Psalter suggests the Moscow origin of its scribe.¹³ Records indicate that Metropolitan Cyprian and Bishop Mikhail spent one and a half years together in Kiev in 1396-7. Spyridon must have been with them while working on Bishop Mikhail's Psalter. The bishop was a monk in the Moscow Monastery in the 1370's, but became the Bishop of Smolensk in 1383. Shortly after becoming bishop, it appears that he was sent on several diplomatic missions to Moscow, Constantinople and finally Kiev. The records at the Monastery of the Trinity near Moscow indicate that he died at the monastery and was buried there.¹⁴ According to Vzdornov, Russian colophons do not typically indicate the place of composition unless there is something unusual, for example, if the scribe is away from home during production.¹⁵ This would seem to be consistent with the church documents analyzed by Vzdornov and others in regards to the making of the Kiev Psalter.

As mentioned above, the Psalter's history is unknown from the date indicated by the colophon until the second date, 1518, when Abraham Hlebicky donated it to the Church of St Nicholas. It appears that the Kiev Psalter remained in the church's library for some time. It was re-discovered in the 1820's by a professor from the University of Vilno, and a "prominent figure in the Greco-Uniate Church of Lithuania", who made its discovery public.¹⁶ Several collectors attempted to acquire the manuscript, but it was not put up for sale until a new dean arrived at the church in 1828. Dean M.K. Bobrowski sold the Psalter to a bibliophile named W. Trebicky in 1847. In 1861, Trebicky willed it to Count A.S. Zamoyski of Warsaw. However, the manuscript did not remain in Warsaw long, somewhere between 1874 and 1881 it appeared in the possession of Prince P.P. Vyazemsky of Petersburg who finally sold it to Count S.D Sheremetev, one of the founders of the Society of Amateurs of Ancient Texts and Art. The count housed the society's museum in his palace in Petersburg and in 1881 the Kiev Psalter joined that collection. When the entire collection passed to the Leningrad Public Library in 1932, the manuscript was unbound into gatherings, which were then cleaned and flattened.¹⁷

Within decades of being discovered, the manuscript was already the subject of considerable analysis. Most of the published works were done in the late nineteenth century in Polish, Lithuanian and Russian and unfortunately are not available in

¹³ *ibid.*, 148.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, 149.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 148.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

translation. By 1890 the Society of Amateurs of Ancient Texts and Art had planned to publish a lithographic facsimile, but for some reason they failed to complete the project. Another attempt was made in 1900, and again during the early years of the Soviet regime, but it was not until 1978 that a complete facsimile was made.¹⁸

While the text was undoubtedly written by Spyridon, the manuscript's illustrations are believed to be the product of an artist from a Moscow scriptorium. According to Olga Popova, the style of illustration is clearly the work of an artist trained in the Moscow School.¹⁹ Both Popova and Vzdornov agree that the illuminator had a keen understanding of Byzantine book art in the eleventh century. The miniatures are copied skillfully, containing light, dynamic figures, vivid colour combinations and contrasts without shading. The figures are given an ethereal feel through the use of gold lines for highlighting. In contrast to typical Byzantine icons of the period, the figures are also very expressive, faces clearly showing emotions like joy and sorrow. Their gestures are dynamic and the scenes have a sense of movement not typical of eleventh-century manuscript art.²⁰ Of particular interest is the illustrator's use of planes within a scene. Multiple planes are indicated through the use of architecture, landscape, and objects. For example, on folio 197 recto, the main figure in the scene appears twice: on the ground and in the tree. This presents a sense of both space and the passage of time.

Although the style is a blend of Byzantine and Russian schools, the iconography is clearly Byzantine. The miniatures include scenes of the Nativity with the typically Eastern bathing scene, multiple images of the *Anastasis*, dozens of personifications of rivers and other natural phenomena, and a brilliant Last Judgement scene that completely fills the margins of folio 180 recto. These Byzantine iconographic trends are examined in more detail below. In addition to the Byzantine iconography, folio 2 recto begins with a headpiece containing a septet *deësis*. Christ is flanked by Mary, John the Baptist, the archangels Michael and Gabriel and the Apostles Peter and Paul. The entire set is contained within an ornate frame composed of a floral motif executed in gold and vivid colour. The headpiece occupies one third of the space normally reserved for text. The Moscow Museum of Art and Industry completed a survey of Medieval Russian and Byzantine manuscript ornament, which made apparent certain trends in purely decorative

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ Olga Popova, *Russian Illuminated Manuscripts*. Trans. by K. Cook, V. Ivanov, L. Sorokina. (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1984), plate 28 and commentary.

ornament. The style of the *deësis* frame is very like some of the ones used in Byzantine manuscript art of the tenth and eleventh centuries.²¹ Conversely, the fourteenth-century headpieces are typically in the knot-work style of the Psalter of Ivan the Terrible.²² This seems to further support the evidence suggesting an eleventh-century model for the Kiev Psalter.

The manuscript illustrations are of various types, including a frontispiece, commentary, narrative illustration and decorated initials. The frontispiece portrays David, sitting within an architectural frame, and writing the psalms. This style is very conventional, occurring in numerous psalters and other kinds of religious manuscripts of the Russian medieval period. The rest of the illustrations appear to belong to two thematic groups: commentary and narrative. The nature of these illustrations is directly connected to the purpose of the manuscript, as illustrated by J. Anderson's analysis of the Theodore Psalter.²³ He states that

One can demonstrate how the Psalter evolved from a study text rooted in and reinforcing a view of man's place in a structured plan to a book of moral lessons pertaining to the conduct of life and illuminating the individual's relationship to God.²⁴

The Kiev Psalter, like the Theodore Psalter, was produced for use by specific members of the clergy, who would be able to comprehend the layered meanings within the text and images.

Anderson identifies a group of ten manuscripts produced over a five hundred-year period based on studies done by J. Tikkanen.²⁵ He goes on to discuss the various analyses of the manuscripts which group them into clusters based on period. Ultimately, he appears to conclude that the marginal psalters of the eleventh century are generally interpretive, personalized copies of their ninth-century counterparts.²⁶ At the same time,

²⁰ Popovo, *Russian Illuminated Manuscripts*, 19. Vzdornov, *Commentary*, 152.

²¹ Moscow Museum Of Art And Industry, *Medieval Russian Ornament In Full Color: From Illuminated Manuscripts*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1994), 3.

²² Lenin Library, Moscow, ms M. 8662

²³ Jeffrey Anderson, "On the Nature of the Theodore Psalter," *Art Bulletin* 70 (December 1988): 550-568.

²⁴ *ibid.*, 550.

²⁵ *ibid.*, 550.

²⁶ *ibid.*, 551-3.

he seems to indicate that the ninth-century Khludov Psalter at least partially served as a model for a group of manuscripts produced in the Studios Monastery during the eleventh century.²⁷ However, he is very adamant regarding the distinct nature of each manuscript, insisting that the illuminators were not limited to merely copying their model, but that they were free to interpret and expand upon it. He states:

Accuracy to a single collection of images did not guide any of the illuminators, with the possible exception of the Barberini Painter. Virtually all of them consciously added and modified, presumably with some purpose in mind.²⁸

As this was the trend in Byzantium, it is not unthinkable that the same trend existed in the schools of medieval Russia. There are in fact, a number of similarities between the Theodore, Khludov and Kiev Psalters. Of course, there are a number of differences as well.

All of these manuscripts contain numerous portraits of saints, typically identified with an inscription. The saints and King David are frequently portrayed standing with their arms raised in prayer. Anderson suggests that this is an indication of the Psalter's role as an instrument of mediation between the reader and God.²⁹ Contrastingly, it can be said that the prayer-like positioning of the figures emphasizes the role of the speaker. For example, in the Kiev Psalter, David typically appears either praying or speaking directly to Christ. The figure is usually linked to a line of the psalms, as though he is being portrayed in the act of reciting the words indicated.

Other similarities include specific, non-iconographic sets of images. For example, the Khludov Psalter shows an image of "a bird nesting on a column as an illustration of Ps. 104:17"³⁰ ("Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house.") Fascinatingly, Theodore chose to use exactly the same image, but assigned it to Ps. 102:7, ("I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top."). The Kiev Psalter, on the other hand, has three very similar images assigned to psalms 102-4. Psalm 102:6 is illustrated on folio 139 verso by an image of a stork in a tree, with David

²⁷ *ibid.*, 553.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 553.

²⁹ *ibid.*, 566.

³⁰ *ibid.*, 559. Please note: the psalms discussed here have all been converted to the numbering contained within the King James Version of the Bible for the sake of consistency.

standing at its base, arms upraised in prayer. Image two is of an eagle in a tree on folio 141 verso. At the base of a tree stands an old saint labeled *старецъ*, which can be translated as “old man”. The man is in exactly the same position and pose as David at the base of the tree on folio 139. The psalm to which the eagle is connected is 103:5 (“Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s”). The third image of the birds belongs to the very next psalm, 104:16-18, the same as the one seen in the Khludov Psalter. Again, the nest is in a tree, but this time it is occupied by more than one bird. At the base of the tree is an unidentifiable animal, possibly a goat, (“The trees of the Lord.../Where the birds make their nests.../The hills are a refuge for the wild goats...”). While it becomes tempting to posit the existence of either a manuscript or a specific scheme from which the Khludov, Theodore and Kiev Psalters must have derived, there is not enough evidence for this.

Another similarity between the images of the Khludov and Kiev Psalters occurs on folios 96 recto and 134 recto respectively, in connection to Ps 96. Both manuscripts contain elaborate illustrations of the construction of a house or sanctuary, including images of pulleys and people climbing on all levels of the building. However, the Theodore Psalter, according to Anderson, has a simple house in the same position with a modified version of the construction scene appearing next to Ps. 127. Again, this could suggest that the model for the Kiev Psalter either derived from the Khludov Psalter or from another manuscript similar to and possibly pre-dating it.

There are certain differences that are striking, and may serve to describe the attitudes of the Russian manuscript artist who copied the images. Two trends from the Khludov Psalter and the eleventh-century manuscripts that imitated it are seemingly absent from the Kiev Psalter. There does not appear to be a single image of alms-giving in Spyridon’s work, whereas it appears repeatedly in the schemes of the Byzantine books. When discussing the trend in Byzantine manuscripts, Anderson states that “charity is the medieval Byzantine virtue *par excellence*,³¹ and while it should also be important in Russian culture of the medieval period, it does not appear to play a role in the Kiev Psalter. Perhaps a more comprehensible divergence is the lack of reference to the iconoclasm in the Russian work. The period of iconoclasm occurred more than a century before the conversion of Russia to Christianity, and would therefore be a non-issue to

³¹ *Ibid.*, 560.

Russian religious figures. The place of the icon was always secure in Russia. Anderson suggests a link between the anti-iconoclast images of the Khludov Psalter with its illustrations of charity,³² and this may explain why the subject of charity was neglected in the Russian manuscript. However, he also submits that the artists of the Studios Monastery had separated the schemes in their own work.³³ This could be an argument against the Kiev Psalter's model having originated at Studios, but that is purely speculation and unfortunately, there is no way to explore it further.

The most common type of imagery in the Kiev Psalter occurs in the form of commentary. The images suggest ways in which the text can or should be interpreted.



Left: Fig 1. Kiev Psalter, folio 28 r.

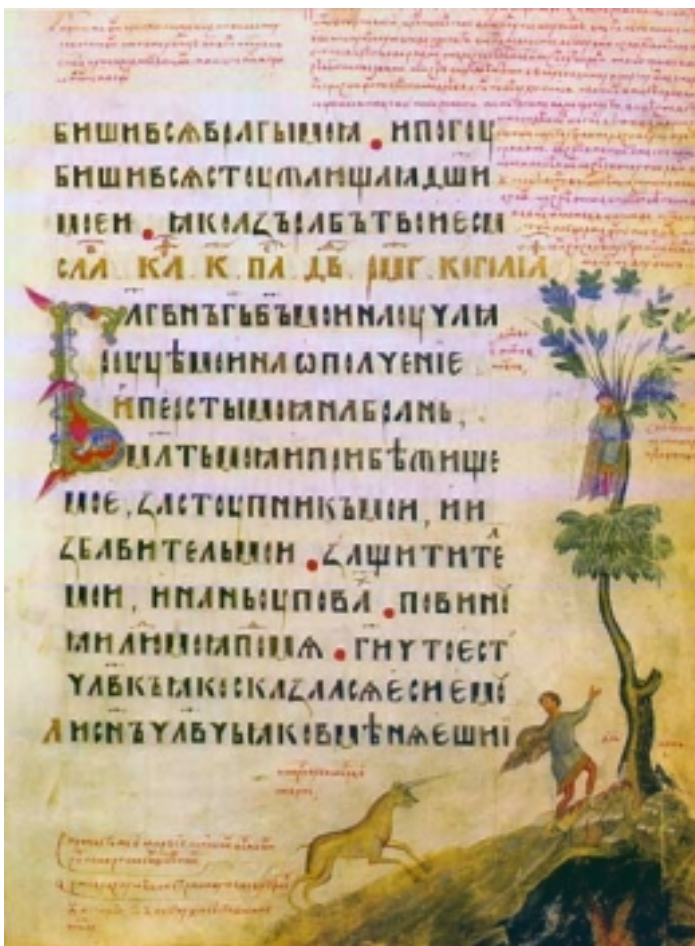
Below: Fig 2. Khludov Psalter, folio 19 v.



There are numerous examples of this but a few of them stand out in particular. Folio 28 recto has a set of three related images, all directly connected to lines in Ps. 22. The first image is of Christ, surrounded by four soldiers carrying spears and shields. The soldiers' heads are not human, but dog-like instead. It is interesting to note that rather than wearing the uniform and armour of Roman soldiers, they are all dressed in the style of Byzantium in the eleventh century. The lines of text to which the image refers are line 16 ("For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and feet"), and line 20 ("Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog"). The second illustration is of Christ being nailed to the cross, which probably refers to the second half of like 16. The third image, appearing in

³² *ibid.*, 560-1.

the bottom margin of folio 28 recto, is of three men with a pile of clothing. The line between the men and the text appears to link them to line 18 (“They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture”). Because of the nature of the psalms, the words supply no direct link between themselves and the arrest and execution of Christ. However, religious commentators interpreted the psalms as prophecies of the New Testament, and the illustrations of marginal psalters are used in this manner to link the prophecies with the events to which they refer. The same image of the dog-soldiers appears in the Khludov Psalter on folio 19 verso, while the other two are located on the facing page.



The illustrations of the Kiev Psalter vary in size, sometimes filling the margins completely, but more often occupying only portions of the available space. Among the full marginal images is the illustration called the “Fable of the Unicorn,” referring to an apocryphal story called the “Fable of the Sweetness of this World”.³⁴ The story comes from an early Christian religious romance, the Greek version of which has been attributed to St John of Damascus (675-749). Ioasaph, the son of a pagan king, had chosen to convert to Christianity after meeting and talking with St Barlaam.³⁵ In order to teach Ioasaph about his new faith, Barlaam told him a

series of parables, including the one portrayed in the Kiev Psalter. The story is complex, but its conclusion is laid out completely for the reader of the Psalter in a tiny, vermillion legend filling the top margin. There is no line connecting the image to a specific part of

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Popova, *Russian Illuminated Manuscripts*, plate 29.

Ps. 144, however, Popova and Vzdornov both suggest a connection between lines 3 (“Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! Or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!”) and 4 (“Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away”).³⁵

Narrative scenes are not common in marginal psalters that contain illustrated commentary. In spite of this, the Kiev Psalter appears to use straight-forward narrative illustrations on more than one occasion. A simple example of this occurs in the Odes towards the end of the Psalter on folio 220 recto. The tale is about Jonah and the whale, and is illustrated in such a way that the series of images can be read from top to bottom. The topmost scene is of Jonah, sitting beneath a tree praying. Below him is an architectural structure, and below that lies the sea. The images occurring with the sea are meant to be read from right to left in order to maintain continuity with the upper and side margins. The bottom right shows Jonah falling out of a boat and into the mouth of the whale. The whale appears to be a strange combination of a dog or wolf and a fish. The next step in the sequence shows Jonah in the belly of the whale at the same time as he is being spit onto the shore.

A longer and more complex set of narrative pictures appears to illustrate psalm 78, which has 72 lines. The psalm tells the story of Moses and the flight from Egypt, berating the behaviour of God’s chosen people. The cycle of images actually begins with Ps. 77:20 (“Thou leadest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron”). The side margin of folio 105 recto is partially filled with a rocky cliff that Moses and Aaron are climbing down. Behind them, on the top of the cliff stands a group of people poised to follow. The next psalm begins on folio 105 verso with the line “Give ear, O my people, to my law...”, Ps. 78:1. The line of text is linked directly to an image of Moses bearing a scroll. The psalm continues, recounting the miracles caused by God for his people. Line 13 (“He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as a heap”) is illustrated by an image of Moses, Aaron and their flock crossing the seabed. At the top of the cliff behind them stands an army mounted on horseback. The perspective of the image is confused as the water seems to extend from the bottom and the top of the cliff at the same time. The story of the parting of the sea is

³⁵ See Appendix A for the fable as found at: “Barlaam and Ioasaph,” Online Medieval and Classical Library Release #20, <<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/OMACL/Barlaam/parts11-15.html>> (1996).

³⁶ Popova, *Russian Illuminated Manuscripts*, plate 29. Vzdornov, *Commentary*, 140.

not picked up again until line 53 on folio 109 verso. In the intervening pages there are eight other images. They include the cleaving of the rocks to find drinking water, mana raining from heaven and the birds falling from the sky. Also included is a series of images of God's punishment of Egypt: the rivers turning to blood; the hail-storms; and the plague of flies. The same image of the falling birds can be found in the Theodore Psalter on folio 104 recto. That image combines the birds with the plague of frogs.



Left: Fig 4. Kiev Psalter, folio 107 v.

Below: Fig 5. Theodore Psalter, folio 104 r



The final scene of the Kiev Psalter's psalm 78 fills the side margin of folio 110 verso completely. David is standing at the base of a mountain surrounded by trees. At the peak is an icon of Mary and the infant Christ with beams of light from heaven surrounding them. The psalm states "And he built his sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which he hath established for ever. / He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds," Ps. 78:69-70. David is singled out as God's servant, his task being to lead people to Christ through the psalms. Standing at the base of the mountain, he points to its peak where Christ and God's sanctuary are waiting. A similar series of images can be found in the same place in both the Khludov and Theodore Psalters, again suggesting a common origin for their illustrative cycles.

Fig 6. Kiev Psalter, folio 188



Throughout the manuscript, certain elements are regularly personified, for example, rivers are typically depicted as pouring out of the mouths of blue figures or from urns that they are holding. The bloody rivers of psalm 78 are depicted as a male and female figure, each holding an urn. The figures, their urns, and the water pouring forth are all portrayed in three shades of red and orange. On folio 188 recto, light and darkness are indicated by figures drawing chariots, which is very interesting as in Russian folklore day and night are carried by horsemen dressed entirely in red and black respectively. The images illustrate Ps. 136:8-9, (“The sun to rule by day.../The moon and stars to rule by night...”). Similar personifications appear in the Khludov Psalter, but they seem to be more sophisticated than those of the Kiev manuscript. The figures of the rivers, for example, are colourful images of dancing people bearing urns with the water streaming behind them. While locating images from the Theodore Psalter has proven difficult, it would likely be safe to suggest that similar personifications would exist in that manuscript as well.

There are many standard elements of Byzantine iconography that appear in the Kiev Psalter. These same elements occur in the Khludov Psalter and must also be found in Theodore’s manuscript as well. Scenes portraying the Annunciation, Nativity, Ascension, *Anastasis* and Baptism are quite common. Folio 118 recto has an illustration of the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth, a scene found in the West as well as the East. They are embracing as they meet in front of a large building with two towers. The image is very interesting, set within a space defined by a combination of architecture and landscape. They stand on grass, with the building behind them and a tree behind the building. The architecture seems rather strange however, as it has the problem of multiple vanishing points typical of thirteenth and fourteenth century Byzantine art. The

architectural perspective may be one of the elements of fourteenth-century Russian and Byzantine style which emerges in the eleventh-style ornamentation of the volume.

Another particularly important iconographic element of the Kiev Psalter is the appearance of a Last Judgement scene on folio 180 recto. While the same scene does not appear in the Khludov Psalter, it is not an unknown image in Byzantine art. This particular Last Judgement is not in the complete iconographic form. At the top, Christ appears enthroned with six saints standing behind him. While the saints were at one time labeled, the inscriptions have unfortunately been cropped. Flanking Christ are Mary and John the Baptist, presenting the standard *deësis* form. The river of fire extends from the mouth of a beast at the base of Christ's throne, passing through a group of six more saints seated below. The river continues past a group awaiting judgement, the *psychostasis* and finally opens into a pit of hell filling over half of the bottom margin. Hell is comprised of a large demon labeled *саманас*, or Satan, the head of an enormous beast with a gaping mouth, a set of black demons and a cluster of people, including monks and clergy. Appearing next to Ps. 122, the image must relate to line 5 ("For there are set thrones of judgement, the thrones of the house of David"). Psalm 122 speaks of travelling to Jerusalem, so the potential interpretation suggested by the illustration is that the throne of judgement on Judgement day will be situated at Jerusalem.

The last ornamental aspect of the Kiev Psalter that bears discussion is the series of decorative initials. In the Khludov Psalter, the initials appear in rubrics in the margins. Typically, their x-height is over 1.5 times the size of the rest of the letters. These initials appear to mark the beginning of every sentence. The Theodore Psalter uses the same system, but also has some larger, more ornamental initials that probably mark the beginning of each psalm. They likely use more than one colour, and their style appears to be vegetative. While the rubric letters are still 1.5 times the standard x-height, the ornamental initials are over 3 times the x-height of the rest of the text. There does not appear to be any historiated initials. The Kiev Psalter, in turn uses the same elements seen in the Theodore Psalter, however, the ornamental initials vary in size from 2 to 4 times the x-height of the rest of the text. They are typically vegetative in style, using red, blue, green and gold for colours. Occasionally, letter-forms using knot-work appear instead of the more traditional stylized leaf and floral motifs. While the latter seems to appear first in the eleventh century and persists through the fifteenth, the knot-work style

seems to be typical of the twelfth through sixteenth centuries. After the twelfth century, animals appear frequently in the initials of manuscripts, in fact, it seems that most manuscripts will have a large number of ornamental initials that incorporate animals. However, they do not appear even once in the Kiev Psalter. This once again probably supports the theory of the earlier model for the manuscript.

While the model for the Kiev Psalter remains elusive, it is apparent that the majority of the evidence supports its existence in Spyridon's period. The illustrations and ornament of the Kiev Psalter are strongly modeled after an eleventh-century Byzantine Psalter. This manuscript may have even served as a model for other eleventh-century works, or else was copied from an even earlier source. It is possible that the model came from the Studios monastery and was copied and adapted from the Khludov Psalter, or that it derived from a similar manuscript to the Khludov.

Produced by a clerical scribe and one or two artists of the Moscow school, its intended patron was a high-ranking member of the Orthodox Church in Russia. The illustrations reflect the patron and his ability to interpret the psalms according to Byzantine and Russian commentary trends of both the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. Why it was created to reflect a style that was already centuries old is unknown, but perhaps Bishop Mikhail and his scribe Spyridon were simply fascinated with the history of their faith and their important but declining neighbours in Byzantium. Whatever their reasons, this luxury volume of psalms was a treasure when it was first made, and has been treasured by religious patrons and scholars alike ever since. Its rich illustrations and state of complete preservation make it a valuable resource for modern scholars of medieval Russia.

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Appendix A

These men that have foolishly alienated themselves from a good and kind master, to seek the service of so harsh and savage a lord, that are all agog for present joys and are glued thereto, that take never a thought for the future, that always grasp after bodily enjoyments, but suffer their souls to waste with hunger, and to be worn with myriad ills, these I consider to be like a man flying before the face of a rampant unicorn, who, unable to endure the sound of the beast's cry, and its terrible bellowing, to avoid being devoured, ran away at full speed. But while he ran hastily, he fell into a great pit; and as he fell, he stretched forth his hands, and laid hold on a tree, to which he held tightly. There he established some sort of foot-hold and thought himself from that moment in peace and safety. But he looked and descried two mice, the one white, the other black, that never ceased to gnaw the root of the tree whereon he hung, and were all but on the point of severing it. Then he looked down to the bottom of the pit and espied below a dragon, breathing fire, fearful for eye to see, exceeding fierce and grim, with terrible wide jaws, all agape to swallow him. Again looking closely at the ledge whereon his feet rested, he discerned four heads of asps projecting from the wall whereon he was perched. Then he lift up his eyes and saw that from the branches of the tree there dropped a little honey. And thereat he ceased to think of the troubles whereby he was surrounded; how, outside, the unicorn was madly raging to devour him: how, below, the fierce dragon was yawning to swallow him: how the tree, which he had clutched, was all but severed; and how his feet rested on slippery, treacherous ground. Yea, he forgot, without care, all those sights of awe and terror, and his whole mind hung on the sweetness of that tiny drop of honey. "This is the likeness of those who cleave to the deceitfulness of this present life, -- the interpretation whereof I will declare to thee anon. The unicorn is the type of death, ever in eager pursuit to overtake the race of Adam. The pit is the world, full of all manner of ills and deadly snares. The tree, which was being continually fretted by the two mice, to which the man clung, is the course of every man's life, that spendeth and consuming itself hour by hour, day and night, and gradually draweth nigh its severance. The fourfold asps signify the structure of man's body upon four treacherous and unstable elements which, being disordered and disturbed, bring that body to destruction. Furthermore, the fiery cruel dragon betokeneth the maw of hell that is hungry to receive those who choose present pleasures rather than future blessings. The dropping of honey denoteth the sweetness of the delights of the world, whereby it deceiveth its own friends, nor suffereth them to take timely thought for their salvation."