

Dominik Chudzik

OUTLINE OF THE STATE OF RESEARCH ON HISTORY AND FUNCTIONING OF BUILDING WORKSHOPS ON TERRITORY OF KIEVAN RUS'

Abstract: The first groups of artisans associated with monumental architecture appeared in Rus' in the tenth century. Initially, they consisted mainly of skilled workers coming from the area of the Byzantine Empire. Their works are the oldest brick buildings in Kiev, Chernihiv, Veliky Novgorod, Polotsk and Pereiaslav-Khmelnytskyi. In the twelfth century separated building organizations worked in other gords of Rus'. They consisted of local craftsmen and artisans from outside control of the Rurik dynasty. The builders worked mainly for the princes, high-ranking hierarchs of Eastern Orthodox Church, religious orders and nobles. Leading architects sometimes had very high social status. Building organizations of Rus' served various functions in society. Their main task was to build churches, they were thus of great importance to the preservation of Christianity in Eastern Europe. In addition, the magnificent temples and palaces were a manifestation of high social status of their founders.

Key words: building organizations, Kievan Rus', the early Middle Ages

Organisation of early medieval construction trade groups in Europe is poorly known due to paucity of written sources. For the latter half of the first millennium AD all we have is the mention of *magistri comacini* ("master masons") in the edict of the Longobard King Rothari of 643 and in later additions to the document of 668 and 712–734.¹ On the basis of such sparse information scholars have attempted a reconstruction of the organisation and functioning of construction workshops in northern Italy of the seventh and eighth centuries, frequently arriving at opposite conclusions.² We basically lack any credible evidence for the functioning of guilds in the Romanesque period. According to J. T. Frazik the weight of monumental construction in Western Europe rested primarily on monastic orders, which in order to maintain a growing web of monastic establishments developed the institution of *conversi* or lay brothers with no clerical duties who instead worked in a variety of trades, including masonry and stonemasonry. That is not to say, however, that the early Middle Ages knew no independent construction crews made up of laymen. The make-up of construction teams in Western Europe and the character of their work is also sometimes inferred from later written sources collated with analysis of the architectural remains themselves.³

According to Russian scholars the first masons may have appeared in Kievan Rus' before official adoption of Christianity. The basis for such presupposition is the existence of annalistic testimonies to the presence in mid-tenth century Kiev of a small residential building of stone,

¹ WYROBISZ 1962, p. 751.

² WYROBISZ 1962, p. 751; FRAZIK 1975, pp. 137–138.

³ ŁUŻYŃIECKA 1998, pp. 22–23; FRAZIK 1975, pp. 137–138; WYROBISZ 1962, pp. 752–755.

located next to the chief princely residence, still presumably made of timber. According to P. A. Rappoport it may have been raised by Kievan builders for Princess Olga after her return from Constantinople.⁴ Rapid development of brick construction in Rus' dates, however, to the years following 988, that is Prince Vladimir I the Great's baptism at Byzantine hands, which brought his state within the sphere of eastern Christianity.⁵ The event necessitated construction of sacred architecture to serve the needs of new religious cult. An overwhelming majority of scholars identify the Kievan church of the Dormition of the Virgin, widely known as the church of the Tithes.⁶ *The Tale of Bygone Years* — the most important source for the early years of Rus' — says the church was the work of Byzantine artisans (*masteri ot grek*), invited to Kiev by the prince. More or less simultaneously with the construction of the church, a residential complex of brick buildings was erected in its vicinity. It is presumed that the masons left Kiev for their native parts after completing the work. Another wave, or presumably several waves of inflow of Constantinopolitan builders to Rus' began in the 1030s. The construction of several brick monuments of Kiev in the 1040s and 1050s is probably connected to their presence. These include the Saint Sophia Cathedral, the Golden Gate and the churches of St. George and St. Irene. In the period cathedral churches of brick also come to be erected in the centres of Rus' other than Kiev: Chernihiv (the Transfiguration Cathedral of the 1030s), Veliky Novgorod and Polotsk (St. Sophia cathedrals of the mid-eleventh century). As of the 1060s construction in Rus' is again restricted solely to Kiev.⁷ The scale and intensive development of monumental architecture in the first half of the eleventh century hints at the beginnings of an emergent homegrown group of masons, whose skills derived from migrant Byzantine masters. Their activities allowed for the formation of an architectural school of Kiev. A second construction workshop, independent of the capital, emerged at the end of the eleventh century at Pereiaslav-Khmelnytskyi. Just as was the case with the most important urban centre of Rus', here also it was the arrival of skilled workers from Byzantium that led to a transfer of masonry skills to the locals.⁸

In the twelfth century, amid the deepening political fragmentation of Rus', the number of new regional construction workshops was rising rapidly. At the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, construction resumes at Chernihiv. At the beginning of the twelfth century, a new chapter opens in the architectural history of the Novgorod region, not without participation of artisans from Kiev.⁹ Before the first quarter of the twelfth century is over, the Halych school of architecture begins to emerge. Most scholars link its formation and development to arrival of Romanesque building crews. Around the mid-twelfth century some of the artisans move from there to the Vladimir-Suzdal region.¹⁰ In the 1140s groups of artisans from Chernihiv and Kiev start work in the Polotsk and Smolensk regions. At the beginning of the latter half of the twelfth century the Pereiaslav group of builders moves to Volodymyr-Volynsky. In the last quarter of the twelfth century monumental construction fades away at Polotsk, while an independent architectural centre develops at Grodno.¹¹ Thus by the beginnings of the thirteenth century Rus' has no fewer than seven independent, if frequently genetically connected building workshops.¹²

As is clear from written evidence, medieval construction crews were known in Rus' as "teams" (*družina*). At the head of each team was the architect, most commonly referred to as "master" (*master*) in the sources. Sometimes he was known as *zdatel* or *stroitel* ("builder", "creator"), *arhitekton* ("architect"), *hitrec* or *hudožnik* ("an artful one", "artist"). His most important roles probably included deciding the building's ground plan, overseeing the construction process and

⁴ RAPPOPORT 1986, p. 17.

⁵ SALAMON 2005, pp. 525–529.

⁶ RAPPOPORT 1985a, p. 155.

⁷ RAPPOPORT 1985a, pp. 155–157.

⁸ RAPPOPORT 1986, pp. 23, 44–47.

⁹ RAPPOPORT 1986, pp. 67–70; 1994, pp. 84–85.

¹⁰ RAPPOPORT 1968, pp. 460–462; IOANNISIAN 1988, pp. 186–190; 1996, pp. 157–161; CHUDZIK 2014, pp. 137–204.

¹¹ RAPPOPORT 1986, p. 67; 1994, p. 125.

¹² RAPPOPORT 1985b, p. 85.

coordination of the team of constructors. He may also played the role of the chief mason or stonemason.¹³ The master may also have been responsible to some extent for the administration of the construction. It seems, however, more likely that the main administrator and thus the person responsible for the collection, regular inflow and distribution of finance was the sponsor of the construction or an official appointed by him.¹⁴ In case of large architectural endeavours, the master may have had one or several helpers or disciples.¹⁵

The most important group of construction workers were the masons (*kamen'ici*), who laid the foundations, built the walls and vaults and in the case of stone buildings — also hewed the stones (stonemasons or *kamenoseči*). The group also includes sculptors who made architectural details. It is likely that all the masons were closely connected to the overseeing architect. The number of masons at a construction site is difficult to estimate. It depended presumably on the size of the building and the kind of material used. It is presumed that a group of craftsmen erecting a stone building was more numerous than one working in brick since stone finishing is hard, time-consuming labour. N. N. Voronin's calculations indicate the construction of the church of the Intercession of the Holy Virgin on the Nerl River near Bogolyubovo (in 1165 or 1166) may have required as many as 30 artisans working simultaneously on erecting the walls and hewing the stones. Calculations for the brick cathedral on Protoka in Smolensk (end-twelfth century) the mason group may have numbered 15 people.¹⁶

According to P. A. Rappoport construction crews working on brick structures included *plin-fotvorci*, workers who used wooden frames for *plints* (*pliny*) or large flat bricks of the Byzantine type, which until the early thirteenth century constituted the most popular construction material in Rus'. The crews also included separate workers responsible for burning the bricks. The latter may also have been engaged in producing lime used by masons as the basis for making mortar. It cannot, of course, be ruled out that some or even most of the brick makers were also engaged in burning them. It must, however, be noted that brick makers were not as closely associated with the groups of constructors as the masons and architects. We know of cases when builders, when moving to another gord, failed to take their brick-maker with them and opted to use local artisans instead. An example of this is found in the construction of the church of St. Paraskeva at Novgorod (early thirteenth century), started by an architect and masons from Smolensk, but using bricks characteristic of the local workshop.¹⁷

Also present at the construction site were carpenters needed for the making of scaffoldings, centrings, stairs, windows, doors and other wooden details.¹⁸ The specific requirements of carpentry connected to stone and brick architecture allow for a suggestion that some at least of the carpenters working on the construction sites were permanently part of the crews.

The construction of stone or brick churches and residential buildings also required employment of other skilled artisans not connected directly to the construction crews, such as glaziers (for making windows) or smiths (for making nails and repairing tools). Outside of the builders' associations were also makers of mosaics and painters decorating church walls with frescoes. According to Russian scholars, the same artists presumably made the painted decoration of the Smolensk churches on the Protoka and Voskresenskaya Gora, though the churches were erected by different construction crews. A hitherto unsolved problem is the organisation of the production of ceramic plaques used for flooring in sacred and residential architecture. According to P. A. Rappoport they may have been formed and burned by the same artisans who made the bricks, though the production of

¹³ RAPPOPORT 1985b, pp. 80–81; RAPPOPORT 1994, pp. 127–128.

¹⁴ WYROBISZ 1963, pp. 109–110.

¹⁵ RAPPOPORT 1985b, p. 81.

¹⁶ VORONIN 1961, p. 325; ČERNYŠEV 1966, pp. 290–293; RAPPOPORT 1982, pp. 58–59, 91–93; 1985b, pp. 81–83.

¹⁷ RAPPOPORT 1982, p. 69; 1985b, p. 83; 1994, p. 130.

¹⁸ RAPPOPORT 1985b, p. 82.

closely associated enamel was, in his view, performed by the glaziers.¹⁹ It may, however, be thought that the production of plaques, which were occasionally made on a mass scale in the context of church and palace architecture (both in stone and timber) was the domain of specialised artisans, working in the largest urban centres of Kievan Rus' but outside the system of construction crews. There are also grounds for thinking that the simple variants of enamelled plaques were made by potters who also produced glazed ceramics. The hypothesis finds confirmation in the discovery at Przemyśl, which for the greater part of this period belonged to the Rurik dynasty's state,²⁰ of a ceramic kiln, which contained both tiles and fragments of vessels.²¹ Probably the construction crews did not include quarry workers, metalworkers producing lead plates for the roof and elements of church furnishings made of nonferrous metal (candlesticks, gilded fittings for altar partitions etc.) and potters who made large, bulbous ceramic vessels (*golosniki*), walled into ceilings to reduce their weight and to improve church acoustics.²²

Large numbers of unskilled workers were also employed at building sites, performing simple functions such as digging foundation ditches, removing earth, levelling the ground for construction, bringing materials for scaffoldings etc.²³ Also indispensable were transport workers lugging building materials around. Some of them, especially those working in river transport, may have been skilled workers.

The functioning of construction crews in Kievan Rus' was entirely dependent on founders of churches, monasteries and palaces. As is clear from the written sources, over the tenth to thirteenth centuries these buildings were almost always financed by members of the princely dynasty hence artisans worked almost exclusively on the prince's commission and were supported by him. Such strong dependence of builders on the rulers is confirmed by the fact that moving a group of masons from one principality to another was frequently preceded by closer political or dynastic links between them. One such example is the migration of builders from Halych to Vladimir-Suzdal in the mid-twelfth century, which was probably associated with the alliance between Prince Yuri Dolgorukiy of Vladimir-Suzdal and the Galician prince, Volodymyrko Volodarovich. The alliance was reinforced by the marriage of Yuri's daughter Olga to Volodymyrko's son, Yaroslav.²⁴ Monumental construction's dependence on princely power may also be confirmed by the presence on bricks and hewn stones of signs in the shape of bi- or tridents, closely associated with the Rurik dynasty. They have been found among other places on the bricks in the Dormition Cathedral in Volodymyr-Volynsky, built, as is known from the *Kiev Chronicle* in the 1160s by Prince Mstislav II Iziaslavich.²⁵

It occasionally happened that teams of builders worked on commission from high-ranking hierarchs of the Church. Such a situation took place at Pereiaslav-Khmelnytskyi, where brick architecture started to develop at the end of the eleventh century on the initiative of Bishop Ephrem, who brought in artisans from Byzantium.²⁶ At Veliky Novgorod, towards the end of the first half of the twelfth century, a group of builders that had previously worked for the princes came to Archbishop Niphont and subsequently offered its services to the Novgorod boyars.²⁷ At the end of the twelfth century stone churches founded by lay potentates presumably made their appearance also in Halych. It has been suggested that the Halych church of St. Elijah erected at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was commissioned by the local boyar Ilya (Elijah) Shchepanovich.²⁸ The construction of boyar-commissioned churches may indicate that the second half of the twelfth century saw (at least in Novgorod and maybe also in Halych) partial emancipation

¹⁹ RAPPOPORT 1985b, p. 82; 1994, p. 128.

²⁰ KOPERSKI 2004, pp. 150–153.

²¹ WAJDA 2010, p. 97.

²² RAPPOPORT 1994, pp. 51–53, 139.

²³ RAPPOPORT 1985b, p. 82.

²⁴ RAPPOPORT 1985b, pp. 85–86; IOANNISJAN 1996, pp. 156–160.

²⁵ RAPPOPORT 1985b, pp. 86–87; KUBICA 1996, pp. 178–179.

²⁶ RAPPOPORT 1986, pp. 44–47.

²⁷ RAPPOPORT 1985b, p. 85.

²⁸ DYBA, PETRYK, 1999, pp. 17–18.

of the builders from complete princely control.²⁹ It is also to be presumed that some of the monasteries had their own construction teams.³⁰

Not much is known about the social position of the members of the early medieval construction trade organisations in Rus'. Written sources completely overlook the issue of the social standing of masons, stonemasons and brick-makers. Without a doubt architects enjoyed the highest social standing. For the period preceding the Mongol invasion we know four of them by name: Petr who built the church for the St. John monastery in Veliky Novgorod (1119), Ivan who oversaw the construction of the church of the Transfiguration of the St. Eufrosine monastery at Polotsk (the 1150s), Korov Yakovlevich who designed the St. Cyril monastery at Veliky Novgorod (1196) and Petr-Miloneg, who built the walls of the Vydubychi Monastery in Kiev (1199).³¹ According to P. A. Rappoport, the chronicler's mention of Korov Yakovlevich (or Yakovich) not only by name but also the patronymic points to the architect's high social standing. Petr-Miloneg must also have been a personage since the *Kiev Chronicle* mentions that Prince Rurik Rostyslavich "found [him] among his friends". Master Ivan of Polotsk, in his turn, was a clergyman, probably a monk.³² The position of the architect must indeed have been fairly high if a chronicler could say that Prince Sviatoslav III Vsevolodovich "was himself the master" of the construction of Saint George Cathedral in Yuryev-Polsky in 1230–1234.³³

Aside from architects, written sources almost never mention the names of other, less important members of construction crews. One of the exceptions is the mention of Avd'ey who worked on the decoration of the portals in the church of St. John Chrysostom at Chełm (present-day Lublin region in Poland), founded by Prince Daniel Romanovich in the 1230s. He must indeed have been a real artist since his work so awed the Chełm populace that, "all those looking were amazed", and his name has been preserved for posterity by the author of description of Chełm at the time of Prince Daniel found in the *Galician-Volhynian Chronicle*.³⁴

The chief role of the builders' associations of Rus' was of course to erect churches. They thus made a direct and huge contribution to the propagation and consolidation of Christianity among the Eastern Slavs. Construction crews worked also on the foundation of monasteries, which served not only as the centres of the religious cult, but also hubs of writing, art and theology in Rus'. Spectacular, admirable churches and residential buildings manifested a high social position of the sponsors (princes or top church hierarchs, as well as the wealthiest boyars) and raised the prestige of a given centre. Church domes towering over a sea of wooden residential architecture informed travellers, traders and artisans from afar of the rank and wealth of the lord.

Bibliography

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| CHUDZIK 2014 | D. CHUDZIK, <i>Chrześcijańska architektura sakralna Rusi Halickiej i Wołyńskiej (do końca panowania Daniela Romanowicza)</i> , Rzeszów. |
| ČERNYŠEV 1966 | M. B. ČERNYŠEV, "O proizvoditel'nosti truda kamenščikov v drevnej Rusi", [in:] <i>Kul'tura drevnej Rusi</i> , ed. A. L. MONGAJT, Moscow, pp. 289–293. |
| DYBA, PETRYK 1999 | Ju. DYBA, V. PETRYK, "Do problemy grafičnoj rekonstrukciji cerkvy Proroka Il'ii u knjažomu Halyči", <i>Visnyk Instytutu "Ukrzahidproektrestavracija"</i> 10, pp. 15–26. |
| FRAZIK 1975 | J. T. FRAZIK, "Organizacje architektoniczno-budowlane w Europie w okresie średniowiecza", <i>Teka Komisji Urbanistyki i Architektury. Oddział PAN w Krakowie</i> 9, pp. 137–151. |

²⁹ RAPPOPORT 1994, p. 133.

³⁰ RAPPOPORT 1985b, p. 86.

³¹ RAPPOPORT 1982, pp. 96–98; 1985b, p. 81.

³² SIELICKI 1987, p. 101; RAPPOPORT 1994, p. 133.

³³ VORONIN 1967, p. 264; RAPPOPORT 1985b, p. 86.

³⁴ PSRL 1908, p. 576; RAPPOPORT 1982, p. 107.

- IOANNISJAN 1988 O. M. IOANNISJAN, "Zodčestvo drevnego Galiča i arhitektura Malopolski", *Acta Archaeologica Carpathica* 27, pp. 185–218.
- IOANNISJAN 1996 O. M. IOANNISJAN, "Pol'sko-russkaja i vengersko-russkaja granicy v XI–XIII vekah i ih otobraženie v razvitii srednevekovoj arhitektury", [in:] *Początki Sąsiedztwa: Pogranicze etniczne polsko-rusko-słowackie w średniowieczu*, ed. M. PARCZEWSKI, Rzeszów, pp. 157–178.
- KOPERSKI 2004 A. KOPERSKI, "Początki osadnictwa słowiańskiego i rozwój wczesno-średniowiecznego Przemyśla", [in:] *Dzieje Przemyśla*, I: 2, ed. A. KOPERSKI, pp. 92–175.
- KUBICA 1996 E. KUBICA, "Katalog zabytków wczesnośredniowiecznej architektury monumentalnej Małopolski, Rusi Halickiej i Wołynia", *Materiały i Sprawozdania Rzeszowskiego Ośrodka Archeologicznego* 17, pp. 131–189.
- ŁUŻYNIECKA 1998 E. ŁUŻYNIECKA, *Architektura klasztorów cysterskich na Śląsku*, Poznań.
- PSRL 1908 *Polnoe Sobranie Russkich Letopisej: Ipatevskaja letopis'* 2, Moscow.
- RAPPOPORT 1968 P. A. RAPPOPORT, "K voprosu o složenii galickoj arhitekturnoj školy", [in:] *Slovjane i Rus'*, Moscow, pp. 459–462.
- RAPPOPORT 1982 P. A. RAPPOPORT, *Russkaja arhitektura X–XIII vv., Katalog pamjatnikov*, Leningrad.
- RAPPOPORT 1985a P. A. RAPPOPORT, "Arhitektura", [in:] *Drevnjaja Rus': Gorod, zamok, selo*, ed. B. A. RYBAKOV, Moscow, pp. 154–167.
- RAPPOPORT 1985b P. A. RAPPOPORT, "Stroitel'nye arteli drevnej Rusi i ih zakazčiki", *Sovetskaja arheologija* 4, pp. 80–89.
- RAPPOPORT 1986 P. A. RAPPOPORT, *Zodčestvo Drevnej Rusi*, Leningrad.
- RAPPOPORT 1994 P. A. RAPPOPORT, *Stroitel'noje proizvodstvo Drevnej Rusi (X–XIII vv.)*, Saint Petersburg.
- SALAMON 2005 M. SALAMON, "Państwa słowiańskie w kręgu kultury bizantyńskiej", [in:] *Wielka Historia Świata*, IV, ed. M. SALAMON, Cracow, pp. 481–525.
- SIELICKI 1987 F. SIELICKI, *Kroniki staroruskie*, Warsaw.
- VORONIN 1961 N. N. VORONIN, *Zodčestvo severo-vostočnoj Rusi XII–XV vekov*, I, Moscow.
- VORONIN 1967 N. N. VORONIN, *Vladimir, Bogoljubovo, Jur'ev-Pol'skoj*, Moscow.
- WAJDA 2010 S. WAJDA, "Średniowieczne ceramiczne płytki posadzkowe z Drohiczyna, Stołpia, Chelma i Przemyśla", *Archeologia Polski* 54.1, pp. 83–119.
- WYROBISZ 1962 A. WYROBISZ, "Czy istniały strzechy budowlane? Z zagadnień organizacji rzemieślników budowlanych w średniowieczu", *Przegląd Historyczny* 53, pp. 745–761.
- WYROBISZ 1963 A. WYROBISZ, *Budownictwo murowane w Małopolsce w XIV i XV wieku*, Wrocław.

Streszczenie

Stan badań nad historią i funkcjonowaniem organizacji budowlanych na terenie Rusi Kijowskiej

Pierwsze grupy rzemieślników związanych z architekturą monumentalną pojawiły się na Rusi w X w. Początkowo tworzyli je głównie wykwalifikowani robotnicy pochodzący z terenu Cesarstwa Bizantyńskiego. Ich dziełem są najstarsze zabytki budownictwa murowanego Kijowa, Czernihowa, Nowogrodu Wielkiego, Połocka i Perejaśławia Chmielnickiego. W XII w. oddzielne ugrupowania budowlane działały także w innych grodach Rusi. Składały się one z rzemieślników zarówno miejscowych, jak i pochodzących spoza granic państwa Rurykowiczów. Budowniczowie

pracowali głównie na potrzeby książąt, wysoko postawionych hierarchów cerkiewnych, monastyrów i możnowładców, a główni architekci osiągalni niekiedy bardzo wysoką pozycję społeczną. Ruskie strzechy budowane pełniły różne funkcje dla społeczeństwa, w którym funkcjonowały. Ich głównym zadaniem była budowa cerkwi, dzięki czemu wniosły one ogromny wkład w utrwalanie chrześcijaństwa na terenie Europy Wschodniej. Ponadto okazałe świątynie i pałace manifestowały wysoką pozycję ich fundatorów.

Dominik Chudzik
Center for Research
on the Antiquity
of Southeastern Europe
University of Warsaw
dominichudzik@wp.pl

