

Three Memorable Christian Women

articles from

*Two Millennia of Memorable Christian
Women: Showing Strength without Power*
by S. Burgess and R. Burgess

Rumyana Hristova, November 22, 2020

LT presentation



Bulgaria under Tsar Simeon (r. 893-927).
Source: Rizoff, 1917, Wikipedia



Kievan Rus in the 11th century.
Source: Encyclopedia Britannica.

Irina of Macedonia, Martyr

(c.1st-2^d c. AD, b. Mygdonia, Macedonia, d. Ephesus, Turkey)

- The first woman recognized as a “great martyr” of the Christian faith
- Converted more than 10,000 pagans through **miracles**
- Her death and resurrection emulated Christ’s
- **Hagiographic literature** – moralizing (didactic) literature; fine line between history and legends
- Principles of Lord’s Kingdom – parables; saints’ lives
- “Irina”, “Eirene” (Ancient Greek, “peace,” “prosperity”), Apostle Timothy; Kingdom’s peace (John 14:27)

Irina of Macedonia, Martyr

- Cult of St. Irina, her iconography (with cross, royal robe, crown) – part of Byzantine Empire politics (divine vs secular peace, Constantinople as New Christian Rome & New Jerusalem)



St. Irina, Greek mosaic, 11 c.

Source:

<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/911894.html>



4. Света Ирина, стенопис от от църквата „Свети Йоан Предтеча“ в с. Карабунар.

St. Irina, mural, St. John the Baptist Church, Karabunar village, 1818, Bulgaria. Source: Vachkova, V. *The Mystery of the Bulgarian Murals*, p. 448



Life of **St. Irina**,
Russian icon, 19 c. Source:
[https://www.pravenc.ru/text/
673929.html](https://www.pravenc.ru/text/673929.html)

Saint Petka-Paraskeva

(10th – 11th c., b. Epivat, d. Kalikratia, present day Turkey)

- One of the most venerated female saint on the Balkans
- Petka's cult – due to the **miraculous healing properties of her relics**, transferred throughout the Balkans, alternate name forms



St. Petka's relics in
Metropolitan Cathedral, Iashi
(Moldova 1641, Romania,
1889). Source:
prevoslavieto.com

Saint Petka-Paraskeva

- Historical sources on St. Petka. Hagiography of Patriarch Evtimiy Tarnovski (1385; Venice 1538) – shows the stages through which a human can attain holiness
- St. Petka's roles – similar to those of Mary, Mother of God (*Theotokos*): protector of human race/family, healer, mediator and intercessor for people before God
- Folklore sources:
 - relation between Petka's name (Friday) and Good Friday; between St. Petka, St. Nedelya (Sunday) and St. Dimitar
 - St. Petka's role as a mediator between worlds, alongside Arch. Michael and St. Nedelya
 - Dragon's slayer – victory over devil and sin (in Greece).
- Iconography of St. Petka



St. Petka, mural, St. Petka Church, Breznik, Bulgaria, 18th or 19th c. Source: personal photo archive

St. Petka, icon, Osogovski Monastery, Macedonia.
Source: personal photo archive





Ил. 84 Св. Петка кефалофороса, заедно със св. Варвара, св. Екатерина и св. Неделя. Стенопис в църквата „Св. Петка“ в с. Побожие, дн. Македония, 1500 г.

Fig. 84 St Petka cephalophore, together with St. Varvara, St. Catherine and St. Nedelya, mural in the St. Petka Church, village of Pobozhie, present day Macedonia, 1500 AD

St. Petka cephalophore (Gr., “head-carrier”), Macedonia, 1500 AD. Source: Vachkova, V. *The Bogomil Alternative*, p. 162

Princess Olga of Kiev (c. 890-969)

- Historical account of Olga as the wife of Prince Igor (r. 912-945) and regent of Kievan Rus (945-c.963), the first female ruler
 - Centralization of power, unification of country, first legal tax system, first stone cities; **paved the way for the Christianization** of the state in 988 by her grandson Vladimir the Great; acute sense of her Christian mission
 - Saint and equal-to-the apostles (1547), one of only five women honored with this status
 - Three contested issues stemming from the *Russian Primary Chronicle* (compiled c. 1113). Instrumental research for uncovering the truth:
 - Prince Mikhail Obolnesky (1805-1873), Director, Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Moscow
 - Archimandrite Leonid (1822-1891), Governor, Trinity-Sergius Lavra
- 1) **Place of birth:** Pleskov/Pskov (mid 12th c., of Varangian/Scandinavian origin; Pl'skova/**Pliska** (10th c.), of Bulgarian royal origin

Princess Olga of Kiev (c. 890-969)

- 2) **Name:** Olga/Helga(Elga) (Varangian/Scandinavian origin); Elena -> Olga (Bulgarian origin); “...brought to him [Igor] a wife from Bulgaria” (15th-cen. manuscript)
- 3) **Place & time of her baptism:** Constantinople, Kiev, Bulgaria. Year: 955 AD (official Russian historiography); or, 946, 957, 959, 960 AD
- Christian name – Helena (after Helena, mother of Constantine the Great or Empress Helena, wife of Constantine VII)
 - *The Book of Ceremonies* by Emperor Constantine VII – Olga was not a pagan, rather a Christian princess; *papas* Grigorii (Gregory), Bishop of Mizia (i.e., Bulgaria); canonized as a Saint for contribution to Kievan Rus’ culture; missionary from **Pliska/Preslav Literary School** (893-972) - Cyrillic script;
 - Boris I (r. 852-889), ruler of First Bulgarian Empire – 864 adopted Christianity; in 885 welcomed Sts. Cyril and Methodius’ disciples; set up Pliska Literary School; slavonic cultural ethnicity and community beyond political boundaries.
 - Russian national political doctrine – Russia as a sole successor of the Byzantine tradition and culture, manipulation of history.



Ил. 106 Княгиня
Олга/ Хелга/ Елена
Плисковска управ-
лявала като ре-
гентка на сина си
Светослав Киев-
ска Рус в периода
945-969. Фреска в
църквата „Св. Вла-
димир“ в Киев

Fig. 106 Princess
Olga / Helga / Hel-
ena of Pliska ruled
over Kievan Rus as
Regent for her son
Svyatoslav in the pe-
riod 945-969. Fresco
in St. Vladimir Church
in Kiev

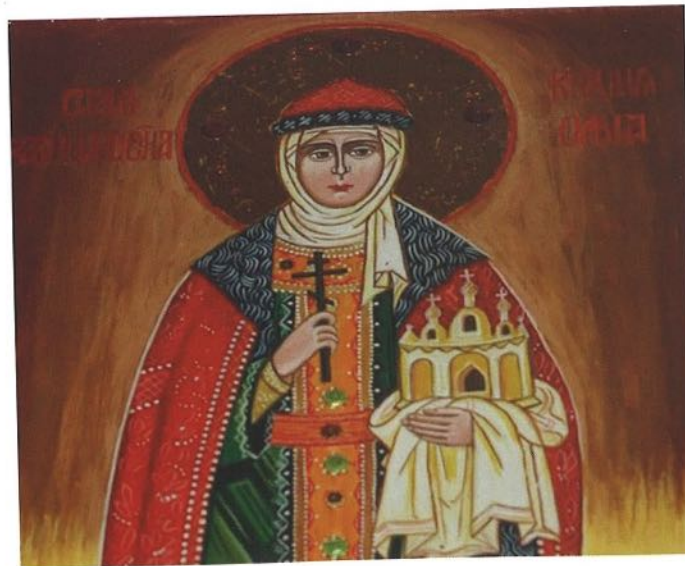
Princess Olga, fresco,
St. Vladimir Church,
Kiev. Source: Vachkova,
V. *The Bogomil
Alternative*, p. 210



28. Света
Олга,
българска
икона.



29. Света Олга, икона от църквата
„Св. Атанасий“, Правец.



30. Света Олга, Икона
от Духовно-просветния
център „Свети Архангел
Михаил“, Варна.

St. Olga, icons, Bulgaria.
Source: Vachkova, V.
*The Mystery of the
Bulgarian Murals*, p.535



Princess Olga, Russian icon. Source: <https://russiapedia.rt.com/prominent-russians/history-and-mythology/princess-olga-of-kiev/>



Saints Vladimir and Olga, fresco, Moskow. Source: Wikipedia

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