

“Polyane, thou now calling Rus’”: the origin of Slavic identity of Rus’.

The Primary Russian Chronicle (the Tale of Bygone years) answers the question and the origin of the people of Rus’: the people of Rus’ and its State – Russkaya zemlya originated from the Varangian retinue (all the Rus’) invited to Novgorod. As an apparent contradiction this claim looks story about the origin of the Slavic written language, placed in the Russian Chronicle under 898: list of the Danubian Slavs who got the written language from Constantine and Methodius -“Morava, and Czechs, and Lyakhs” concludes with the phrase Polyane, thou now calling Rus’ !. A completion of the 898 article does not relieve the contradiction: “Slavonic and Russian language is one and the same: the name of Rus’ originated from the Varangians , though originally they were Slavs - they were known as Polyane because they lived in the field, but the language was Slavonic”.

The composer of the Primary Chronicle transferred a narrative of the Slavonic Mission of Constantine and Methodius under 898 with glaring anachronism (the missionaries were not alive): originally it was read in cosmographic introduction to the Chronicle, which lists the Danubian Slavs, who received the written language: there were Polish Polyane, exiled, among other Lyakhs from the Danube, and the East European Polyane, migrated to the Dnieper River. The last Polyane were conquered by the Varangian prince Oleg who came from Novgorod to Kiev (882). He attacked Constantinople with poly-ethnic army - all the Rus’, Polyane and other Slavs and achieved a written treaty with the Greeks (911). The treaty, drawn up by the Rus’ in the Slavonic language and found by the chronicler, made him to transfer the story of Constantine and Methodius mission to the time of the reign of Oleg; an additional reason for this was the etymological equating of the Polish and Dnieper Polyane, who got the name of Rus’ in the army of Oleg.