

FROM A CONTESTED METROPOLITAN TO A SAINTLY PROTECTOR:
SHAPING METROPOLITAN KIPRIAN'S IMAGE
IN 15th–16th CENTURY MUSCOVY¹

IULIA NIȚESCU

(Research Institute of the University of Bucharest)

This article discusses the shifting perception of Metropolitan Kiprian's image in Muscovy. My analysis focuses on three aspects: Kiprian as a "pro-Lithuanian" actor and the complicated succession of Metropolitan Aleksii in Moscow, Kiprian as a legitimate metropolitan in the accounts and iconographical representations of the 1395 miracle of the icon of the Theotokos of Vladimir, defending Moscow from the Tatar attack, and Kiprian as a rightful member of a legitimate, Moscow-based ecclesiastical succession, after the 1472 discovery of the relics of all metropolitans buried in the Dormition Cathedral. I argue that the initially contested metropolitan became a saintly protector beginning with the second half of the 15th century, due to the emergent Muscovite ideology of power, aiming to illustrate a political and ecclesiastical unity of Rus' polities under Muscovite rule. In Kiprian's case, this culminated with his portrait as an ideal (and legitimate) spiritual father in the 16th-century *Nikon* chronicle, and with some minor attempts to include him among the local saintly protectors of the city.

Keywords: Church history, second South Slavic influence, metropolitan of Kyiv and all Rus', cult of saints, wonder-working icons.

The career of Metropolitan Kiprian of Kyiv and all Rus' (?1331–1406) illustrates the late medieval interconnectivity of Eastern and South Eastern Europe. A Bulgarian who became metropolitan first in Lithuania (in 1375) and later in Moscow (1381, 1389–1406), Kiprian was an advocate of Church unity under the authority of the patriarch of Constantinople and a significant exponent of the second South Slavic influence in Eastern Europe.² He is mostly remembered through his vast cultural activity.³ His works include liturgical works, prayers,

¹ This work was supported by a grant of the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitization, CNCS – UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P1-1.1-PD-2021-0234, within PNCDI III.

² The "second South Slavic influence" concept covers the cultural exchanges between South and East Slavs in the 14th and 15th centuries. It has been extensively used following its introduction by Dmitrii Likhacev. The "First South Slavic influence" covers the late 10th–11th centuries, after the Christianization of Kyivan Rus', Д.С. Лихачёв, "Некоторые задачи изучения второго Южнославянского влияния в России", in *Исследования по славянскому литературоведению и фольклористике: Доклады советских ученых на IV Международном съезде славистов*, Moscow, 1960, p. 95–151.

³ His life and activity were discussed from various perspectives, focusing on his political and cultural achievements. И.Д. Мансветов, *Митрополит Киприан в его литургической деятельности: Историко-литургическое исследование*, Moscow, 1882; Л.А. Дмитриев, "Роль и значение митрополита Киприана

Patristic translations and pastoral letters.⁴ Kiprian's hagiographical work was discussed together with that of his teacher, the Patriarch Evtimii of Tarnovo, as representing the *плетение словес* (*word weaving*) style.⁵ He was also the author of translations from Greek into Slavonic and manuscript copies, of which possibly the best known is the manuscript of the *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, which contains a note on its author, and the date and place where it was finished. Kiprian, entitling himself metropolitan of Kyiv and all Rus' at a time when his claim was not accepted in Moscow, completed the manuscript on 24 April 1387, in the Stoudios Monastery of Constantinople.⁶ His ecclesiastical career in Byzantium coincided with the spread of Hesychasm. Due to his close connections with Byzantine promoters of the movement, such as the Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos, or Rus' representatives, such as the Abbot Sergii of Radonezh, Kiprian has been considered a central figure in the spread of Hesychasm in Eastern Europe. Moreover, his tenure in Moscow corresponded to a time when numerous translations from the works of Saint John Climacus (including Kiprian's own manuscript), Saint Symeon the New Theologian or Saint Gregory of Sinai appeared in Rus' monastic libraries, or to the early activity of Andrei Rublev, whose paintings are considered to be influenced by a Hesychast worldview.⁷ His dedication to Church activities led to a liturgical reform, aiming to align the Rus' religious practice to that of Constantinople.⁸

In the Muscovite chronicles, however, this cultural activity is less prominent. Most mentions of Kiprian revolve around some contradicting aspects of his career. First, the complex political circumstances of his appointment as metropolitan and the long, almost fifteen years-long struggle to be accepted in Moscow. The lack of unity shaped the ecclesiastical and political life of the 14th-century Rus' polities. It was a time when Muscovy started (was at least trying) to assert itself as the main polity and the interests of the metropolitan and the prince of Moscow did not always coincide. The ecclesiastical situation was complicated by the fact that the

в истории древнерусской литературы: К истории русско-болгарских литературных связей XIV–XV вв.", *Труды Отдела древнерусской литературы*, 19, 1963, p. 215–254; Н. Дончева-Панайотова, *Киприан: старобългарски и староруски книжовник*, Sofia, 1981; Н. Дончева-Панайотова et al. (eds.), *Киприанови четения: 600 години от успението на Св. Киприан, Митрополит Московски*, Veliko Tarnovo, 2006.

⁴ For the list of Kiprian's works, see *Словарь книжников и книжности древней Руси* (hereafter *СККДР*), том 2 (1), Leningrad, 1989, p. 470–471, J. Getcha, *La réforme liturgique du métropolitain Cyrilien de Kiev*, Paris, 2010, p. 77–122.

⁵ See M. LaBauve Hebert, *Hesychasm, Word-Weaving and Slavic Hagiography. The Literary School of Patriarch Euthymius*, Munich, 1992. On Kiprian's hagiographical work as part of the second South Slavic influence, see J. Bortnes, *Visions of Glory: Studies in Early Russian Hagiography*, Oslo, New Jersey, 1988, p. 88–135.

⁶ A facsimile of the manuscript was published in Иоанн Преподобный, *Лествица. На церковнославянском языке. Рукопись свт. Киприана, митрополита Московского*, The Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra, 2011.

⁷ J. Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia: A Study of Byzantino-Russian Relations in the Fourteenth Century*, Crestwood, New York, 1989, p. 124–125.

⁸ Getcha, *La réforme liturgique*, p. 135–306.

territory under the jurisdiction of the metropolitan of Kyiv and all Rus' was politically divided among various local rulers. This context generated several temporary separations, from Lithuanian attempts to secure a separate metropolitan for the Ruthenian population under their rule, to Casimir III of Poland's re-establishment of the metropolitan see of Halych.⁹ In this context, Kiprian became a metropolitan of Kyiv and Lithuania, in 1375, and a direct competitor of the Moscow-based Metropolitan Aleksii. The elaborated accounts of Aleksii's succession discuss in detail the complex network of pretenders, political actors and decision-making in Constantinople, leading to Kiprian's acceptance in Moscow only after the death of Grand Prince Dmitrii Donskoi (1389). The second aspect refers to his association with key moments of Muscovite history, such as the arrival of the icon of the Theotokos of Vladimir to Moscow or his place within the Moscow-based ecclesiastical succession. Despite Kiprian's initial image as pro-Lithuanian, these accounts turned his image into an ideal representation of a pro-Muscovite metropolitan and almost to a saintly protector.

The main question this study aims to investigate is how was this transformation possible. Kiprian turned from a contested metropolitan, a "Lithuanian", to an ideal spiritual father and a saintly protector after his relics were discovered in the Dormition Cathedral. My starting point will be the Muscovite chronicle tradition. The main sources employed will be the mid-15th century *Rogozhskii* chronicle, the late 15th century *Moskovskii svod*, and the 16th century *Nikon* chronicle.¹⁰ The selection is not meant to be comprehensive, but rather to offer distinct perspectives on the transformations undergone by accounts of the same moments, due to new ideological developments. The chronicle narratives are corroborated with diplomatic documents about the events discussed. For the Synodal decision in Constantinople, I used the *Acta Patriarchatus Constantinopolitani*, and for Kiprian's letters and documents of the Muscovite Church, the *Russian Historical Library* series.¹¹ The last category of sources employed is visual, namely icons representing the feast of the arrival of the icon of the Theotokos of Vladimir to Moscow, greeted by the Metropolitan Kiprian and the Muscovites. The investigation will follow three key aspects: the conflict between Kiprian and Dmitrii Donskoi and the narratives

⁹ For an overview of the Lithuanian separation attempts in the 14th century, see S.C. Rowell, *Lithuania ascending: A pagan empire within east-central Europe, 1295–1345*, Cambridge, 1995, p. 149–188; J. Meyendorff, "Alexis and Roman. A study in Byzantino-Russian Relations (1352–1354)", *Byzantinoslavica*, 28, 1967, p. 278–288.

¹⁰ I have decided not to use the *Trinity* chronicle, due to its complicated history. The early 15th century manuscript was found at the Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra, but it was destroyed in the 1812 Moscow fire. Priselkov reconstructed the chronicle, based on the large number of quotations used by N.M. Karamzin in the *History of the Russian State*. М.Д. Присёлков, *Троицкая летопись. Реконструкция текста*, Moscow, Leningrad, 1950.

¹¹ *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*, 2 vols., *Acta Patriarchatus Constantinopolitani* (hereafter *APC*), Collecta et ediderunt F. Miklosich et I. Muller, Viena, 1860, 1862; *Русская историческая библиотека* (hereafter *РИБ*), том 6, Sankt Peterburg, 1880. The *РИБ* also contains translations of the Patriarchal Acts related to the metropolitan see of Kyiv and all Rus'.

discussing Metropolitan Aleksii's succession, the transformation of Kiprian's image through his connection with the icon of the Theotokos of Vladimir, and the elaboration of an argument of a legitimate line of Muscovite ecclesiastical succession in the second half of the 15th century, and the impact this argument had on Kiprian's image.

THE CONTESTED METROPOLITAN

Kiprian's life before becoming a metropolitan is little documented. The main information we have comes from three documents. From the encomium authored by Grigorii Tsamblak, we find out he was a Bulgarian and a "brother of our father".¹² Based on this reference, it was assumed that Kiprian was a member of the Tsamblak family.¹³ Other interpretations describe the reference as a spiritual filiation, and the father is the Patriarch Evtimii of Tarnovo.¹⁴ Later 16th century Muscovite sources, such as the *Stepennaia kinga* present him as a Serb.¹⁵ Kiprian's monastic career was mostly recreated based on a letter the Patriarch Evtimii of Tarnovo sent to a certain monk Kiprian "who lives on the Holy Mountain of Athos", who is assumed to be the future metropolitan of Kyiv.¹⁶ The text contains answers to liturgical questions or monastic discipline, but its exact date remains unknown. Only later sources describe Kiprian's career in Constantinople. The 1389 Synodal Act confirming Kiprian as metropolitan of Kyiv and all Rus' mentions him as a close collaborator of the Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos.¹⁷

Kiprian's career in Eastern Europe began in 1373 and it displayed the political and ecclesiastical fragmentation of that time. Due to the military conflict with Muscovy, Prince Algirdas of Lithuania had asked for a separate metropolitan, accusing the Moscow-based Metropolitan Aleksii of showing no interest in the Ruthenian eparchies under Lithuanian authority.¹⁸ The Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos sent Kiprian to Lithuania in 1373 as his ambassador, attempting to mediate an agreement between the two parties. However, Algirdas remained firm on his position and sent to Constantinople a second letter on the topic. This time, in 1375,

¹² "Похвално слово за Киприан", in Б. Ст. Ангелов, *Из старата българска, руска и сръбска литература*, том II, Sofia, 1958, p. 181.

¹³ Е.Е. Голубинский, *История русской церкви*, том II (1), Moscow, 1900, p. 297.

¹⁴ This interpretation was suggested by Johannes Holthusen and adopted by other historians, such as Obolenski and Meyendorff. J. Holthusen, "Neues zur Erklärung des Nadgrobnoe Slovo von Grigorij Camblak auf den Moskauer Metropoliten Kiprian", in E. Koschmieder, M. Braun (eds.), *Slavistische Studien zum VI. Internationalen Slavistenkongress in Prag 1968*, Munich, 1968, p. 372; D. Obolensky, "A `Philorhomaïos Anthropos`: Metropolitan Cyprian of Kiev and All Russia (1375–1406)", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 32, 1978, p. 80–81, J. Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, p. 202.

¹⁵ *Полное собрание русских летописей (ПСРЛ)*, том 21 (2), St. Petersburg, p. 440.

¹⁶ D. Obolensky, "A `Philorhomaïos Anthropos`", p. 82.

¹⁷ *APC* 2, p. 118.

¹⁸ *APC* 1, p. 580–581, *РИБ* 6, p. 136–140.

the patriarch decided to appoint Kiprian as metropolitan of Kyiv and Lithuania, specifying that upon Metropolitan Aleksii's death, the metropolis would be reunited under Kiprian's leadership.¹⁹ The request for a separate metropolitan was both politically and ecclesiastically motivated. Metropolitan Aleksii of Kyiv and all Rus' had been appointed in 1354, and from 1359 he also became regent of the young prince Dmitrii Ivanovich (later known as Donskoi), who ascended the throne at only 9 years old. From this position, Aleksii was directly involved in Muscovy's military disputes with Lithuania, or with other Rus' polities, such as Tver.²⁰

Following the patriarchal decision, upon Aleksii's death on 12 February 1378, Kiprian set off to Moscow, to take over his duties. But the circumstances of his appointment and the years he had spent in Lithuania-ruled territory proved to define his image in Moscow as a pro-Lithuanian actor. By order of the grand prince, he was not allowed to enter the city, was arrested and later expelled. He left for Constantinople, passing through Tarnovo. Kiprian vividly described these events in a letter to Sergii of Radonezh and argued for his rights.²¹ The approximately ten years that followed this moment meant a lack of stability for the metropolitan see of all Rus' and the emergence of a series of local pretenders.

The aftermath of Donskoi's rejection of Kiprian could be read as an action story filled with political power play, miracles, and hazards. The other three main actors (besides Kiprian) were Mitiai, Donskoi's confessor and preferred candidate, the Bishop Dionisii of Suzdal, Mitiai non-Muscovite competitor, and the Bishop Pimen of Pereiaslavl, a man who happened to be in the right place at the right time. The earliest source detailing their struggles is the *Tale of Mitiai*, a text included in Muscovite chronicles already in the mid-15th century.²² According to the *Tale*, Mitiai was the first candidate. Due to the grand prince's appreciation (which, apparently, no one else shared), the former parish priest was quickly tonsured and, without becoming a bishop, he had assumed the insignia and attributions of the metropolitan. This unlawful appointment was contested by the Bishop Dionisii of Suzdal, who also wanted the seat for himself. To resolve the conflict, the candidates left for Constantinople, wishing to obtain patriarchal confirmation. But Mitiai died during the sea voyage and, according to the *Tale*, the ship could not go forward until his body was taken to the shore in Galata, on another smaller boat. However, this moment gave way to another pretender. Among the deceased's belongings, the companions found empty documents with the seal of the grand prince. They decide

¹⁹ D. Obolensky, "A Philorhomaïos Anthropolos", p. 85–86. Obolensky extensively discussed the opposite narratives of the 1380 and 1389 Synodal Acts describing Kiprian's appointment, arguing for a more coherent version of the 1389 Act. *Ibidem*, p. 87–88.

²⁰ J. Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, p. 184–185.

²¹ *РИБ* 6, p. 173–186, English translation in J. Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, p. 293–299.

²² *Словарь книжников и книжности древней Руси (СККДР)*, том 2 (2), Leningrad, 1989, p. 252–253. Its author is unknown, but it is considered to support Kiprian. The oldest version is kept in the mid-15th century *Rogozhskii Chronicle*, *ПСРЛ* 15, p. 124–132. Also published in Г.М. Прохоров, *Повесть о Митяе. Русь и Византия в эпоху Куликовской битвы*, Leningrad, 1978, p. 218–224.

to use them to claim that a member of the suite, the Bishop Pimen of Pereiaslavl, was the candidate sent by Moscow. In Constantinople, their request was rejected, on the claim that there already was a metropolitan of Kyiv and all Rus' appointed by the Patriarch Philotheos, namely Kiprian. The Muscovites then used another empty document to get a loan, used for bribes. Pimen was finally appointed metropolitan and left for Moscow, while Kiprian remained metropolitan in Lithuania.²³

Although the *Tale* did not offer a flattering image of the Muscovite candidates, nor did it feature Kiprian as an active character, it did portray the political reasons behind the ecclesiastical fragmentation of the time, where multiple political actors were attempting to influence the outcome of an internal Church affair. The origin of the candidates and their viewpoints shaped the local Muscovite perception of the metropolitan's authority. Although the chronicles refrain from discussing the accusation Dmitrii Donskoi brought against Kiprian, the metropolitan's own account offers more insights. In the second letter sent to Sergii of Radonezh in June 1378, Kiprian mentioned that the only accusation the grand prince brought to him was that he went first to Kyiv, in Lithuania-ruled territory. What is more, he accused the Muscovites of extending this insult to the patriarch, the emperor and the synod, calling all of them "Lithuanians".²⁴ This letter is extremely important as it was intended for a larger audience, presumably for those supporting Kiprian. Already from the beginning, it was addressed to Sergii, Feodor and anyone else sharing their opinions. And towards the end, the contested metropolitan excommunicated and cursed ("будуть отлучени ... и проклят") all those who participated in his dishonour, and placed anyone daring to destroy the letter under the same penalty.²⁵ But the accusation of being a "Lithuanian" could entail more than political opposition. Algirdas was still a pagan ruler, named in the 1380 Synodal Act as a "fire worshipper".²⁶ Although the accusation of paganism is not made, it could be hinted at, through association. Even Kiprian, in his letter to Sergii, names among his activities in Lithuania buying the liberation of Muscovite prisoners from the "pagans" and converting those who did not believe in God.²⁷

Dmitrii Donskoi's perspective on the local organisation of the Church seemed to be directly connected to his princely power and authority. While his preferred candidate, Mitiai, did not meet the requirements for the metropolitan's office, having a local candidate who was not supported by the grand prince was also perceived as defying his wishes. Dissatisfied to learn that Pimen returned as metropolitan, in February 1381 Prince Dmitrii sent Feodor, abbot of the Simonov Monastery and nephew of Sergii of Radonezh, to Kyiv, to bring Kiprian. Pimen was caught, the insignia of the metropolitan was taken from him, and he was

²³ The history of Mitiai's journey to Constantinople and Pimen's fraudulent appointment was briefly recounted also by the 1389 Synodal Act, *APC* 2, p. 121.

²⁴ *РИБ* 6, p. 182, 185.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 186.

²⁶ *ACP* 2, p. 12.

²⁷ *РИБ* 6, p. 182.

thrown into prison together with his retinue. Kiprian was welcomed as a legitimate metropolitan.²⁸ The sources do not offer any other explanation for Donskoi's change of mind. Kiprian's tenure in Moscow was short-lived. Only one year later, after he left Moscow threatened by a Tatar attack and possibly due to the intervention from Constantinople, where Pimen was considered a legitimate metropolitan, Donskoi decided to remove Kiprian and accept Pimen's appointment. The prince quickly changed his mind again. In 1383, Dionisii of Suzdal went to Constantinople as Moscow's candidate. He got the appointment but, on his way back, he was caught and imprisoned by the Prince Vladimir Algerdovich of Kyiv, and died a year and a half later. Pimen also tried to get a new confirmation from Constantinople, but he too died while travelling, in Chalcedon, in 1389. Neither of Kiprian's three competitors, Mitiai, Dionisii and Pimen, returned to Moscow and they were buried in territories where the grand princes of Moscow had no authority. In 1389, Dimitri Donskoi died too, and Antonios IV became patriarch in Constantinople. Kiprian, who had been in Constantinople since 1385, was confirmed as (sole) metropolitan of Kyiv and all Rus' and left for Moscow, where he would remain until the end of his life.²⁹

Constantinople remained Kiprian's main source of authority in Moscow. The supra-state character of the office of metropolitan of Kyiv and all Rus' and Kiprian's constant struggle to maintain the metropolitan's see unity were opposing Donskoi's policy, who understood the office as a local affair. This might also (at least partially) explain the well-known letter of Patriarch Antonios IV to Prince Vasiliu Ivanovich (September–October 1393), regarding the mention of the emperor's name during the liturgy.³⁰ Beyond the political context behind the decision, related either to the political authorities that controlled the territory of the metropolis of all Rus', or relations with Byzantium, the introduction of the commemoration of the emperor could also function as a method of legitimization for Kiprian.³¹ All the more so since the practice of commemorating the emperor in Rus' was not attested either before or after his tenure. At the same time, the complicated succession of Metropolitan Aleksii in Moscow could have been a source of concern for Constantinople as well. According to the *Rogozhskii* chronicle, when Kiprian returned to Moscow, he was accompanied by two Greek metropolitans, Matthew of Adrianople and Nikandros of Ganos. Soon after, in the winter of 1391, Kiprian went to Tver accompanied by the two Greek metropolitans.³² Coincidentally or not, the two had also been sent to Moscow in 1384, to analyse the context of Pimen's appointment and the Synodal Act of 1380, which confirmed Pimen as

²⁸ *ПСРЛ* 15, p. 131.

²⁹ J. Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, p. 229–235.

³⁰ *РИБ* 6, p. 266–276, it also includes the Greek version, after *АРС* 2, p. 188–192.

³¹ For a detailed analysis of the letter and its political context, see P. Guran, *Rendre la couronne au Christ. Étude sur la fin de l'idée impériale byzantine*, Heidelberg, 2021 (*Supplementa Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, 1), p. 315–332.

³² *ПСРЛ* 15, p. 157–159.

metropolitan, accused Kiprian of dismissing his colleagues, sent with him as security in Lithuania in 1373, and taking over the metropolitan see by deceit.³³

Kiprian's career shows exactly the lack of political and ecclesiastical unity among the Rus' polities of the 14th century and the metropolitan's envisioned role as a mediator. Although the metropolitan spent most of his time in Moscow, he was expected to travel through the dioceses under his jurisdiction. Petr, the first metropolitan to reside in Moscow, had only spent a year there, and the hagiographical texts emphasize his travels. The chronicles mention the trips of Metropolitan Feognost, Petr's successor, to Novgorod or the Horde.³⁴ When Lithuania asked for a separate metropolitan, Algirdas argued precisely that Metropolitan Aleksii had neglected the eparchies under Lithuanian political authority and failed to visit. After returning to Moscow, Kiprian would also travel to Novgorod, Pskov or Lithuania, and such a trip could mean a year spent in that city.³⁵ His image will change only when an intense activity of rewriting chronicles and stories begins in Moscow, in an attempt to portray the history of Rus' polities as unitary, projecting in the 14th century a Muscovite authority emerging only from the second half of the 15th century.

THE LEGITIMATE METROPOLITAN

In the second half of the 15th century, Kiprian's image seems to have been influenced by his involvement in an event which would prove to have a defining impact on Muscovy's self-fashioned identity. In 1395 the army of Timur Lenk was preparing to siege the city, but, without any explanation, they left before attacking. The Muscovites interpreted this moment as a miracle of the well-known icon of the Theotokos of Vladimir, brought to the city with this specific purpose. Historically, Timur's campaign did not have Moscow as its main goal, rather the Rus' polities were caught in the ongoing fights between him and Tokhtamysh.³⁶ However, the moment increased the icon's reputation well beyond the 12th century collection of its miracles.³⁷ New narratives emerged, presenting the moment as proof of the intercession of the Mother of God for the city of Moscow. The *Tale of Temir Aksak* (Timur Lenk) described Temir's rise to power, Moscow's preparations for the siege, how the icons of the Theotokos were perceived as defenders of Christian cities and the decision to bring the well-known icon of Vladimir to Moscow, followed by the miraculous retreat. As the metropolitan in office at that time,

³³ *APC* 2, p. 13–14.

³⁴ *ИСПЛ* 15, p. 54, 55.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 161, 165.

³⁶ Janet Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980–1584*, Cambridge, 2008, p. 224–225.

³⁷ On the 12th century *Tale of the miracles of the icon of the Theotokos of Vladimir*, see *СККДР*, том 1, Leningrad, 1987, p. 426–428.

Kiprian's image became intertwined with this event. The *Tale's* successive redactions shifted the focus from the Grand Prince Vasili I to Kiprian and the contested metropolitan was turned into an ideal spiritual father, who guided the grand prince and acted as a key figure in bringing the wonder-working icon. This transformation culminated with the 16th century spread of the iconographical representations of the icon's arrival in Moscow, met by the Metropolitan Kiprian and the people of the city.

The *Tale of Temir Aksak* is considered to have been produced in the first half of the 15th century and has survived in more than 200 manuscripts produced between the 15th and the 19th centuries.³⁸ Some of the earliest accounts presented the moment as the grand prince's victory.³⁹ The entire narrative glorified Vasili's achievements, presenting him either as a legitimate, god-loving ruler of Muscovy, opposing an illegitimate, pagan Temir-Aksak, or as the force behind Muscovite decisions. The text devoted a large part to Temir's origin and fight for power, from a commoner, a simple servant with evil behaviour turned into a thief who managed to gather others of his kind around him, to a "tsar". His ruthless rise to power, through battles and destruction, and political illegitimacy underlined the rightfulness of the Muscovite grand prince. The account began by presenting Vasili as a legitimate ruler, and descendant of previous grand princes. Throughout the *Tale*, his faith, piety, and strong will are highlighted. When Temir Aksak's army attacked Riazan, Vasili understood Moscow was next and prepared the defence. He asked the metropolitan to pray, together with all the clergy and the people, he remembered how the wonder-working icon of the Theotokos defended Constantinople and decided to ask the metropolitan to bring the icon of Vladimir to Moscow. The icon's arrival was the *Tale's* pinnacle, as the account revolved around the veneration of the Mother of God and the icon's symbolism. The icon left Vladimir on 15 August, when the Dormition of the Theotokos is celebrated, which was also the feast to which the two cathedrals (of Vladimir and Moscow) were dedicated. While the metropolitan and the people of Moscow were meeting the icon, a miracle took place. Without any explanation, Temir Aksak was gripped by terror and a great fear settled in his heart, making him return to the Horde. The *Tale* explained the moment as proof that the Theotokos acted as an intercessor for the city. Moreover, this miraculous event also happened due to the prayers of the holy

³⁸ СККДР 2 (2), p. 283–286. Although most scholars agree *Tale* emerged in the early 15th century, others suggested the 1470–1480s, when the account appeared in chronicle writing. И.Л. Жучкова, "Повесть о Темир-Аксаке в составе летописных сводов XV–XVI вв. (редакция Б)", in Д.С. Лихачёв (ed.), *Древнерусская литература: Источниковедение*, Leningrad, 1984, p. 97–109, A. Ebbinghaus, "The Compilers of the Old Russian *Book of Royal Degrees* at Work: How the 'Povest' na sretenie chudotvornogo obraza' Was Made", in G. Lenhoff, A. Kleimola (eds.), *The Book of Royal Degrees and the Genesis of Russian Historical Consciousness*, Bloomington, 2011, p. 190–191.

³⁹ For the 15th century version of the *Tale*, I used the earliest version, not present in chronicles and published in *Библиотека литературы Древней Руси*, том 6: XIV–середина XV века, Sankt Peterburg, 1999, p. 230–241 (text), p. 550–552 (commentary). My selection of texts is not meant to establish an exact timeline of the *Tale's* emergence and transformations, but rather to illustrate the shifts in Kiprian's image.

Metropolitan Petr, the first metropolitan to reside in Moscow and buried in the Dormition Cathedral. Upon returning to Moscow, Vasilii prayed before the miraculous icon and decided, together with the metropolitan, to erect a monastery on the place where the icon was met.⁴⁰ Throughout the account, Kiprian's role was minimal. In most instances, he simply answered the prince's requests, by praying with the clergy and people of Moscow, organizing the icon's transfer and meeting the procession coming from Vladimir. The metropolitan did not have a voice, or his own initiatives, as the grand prince was the main focus.

Throughout the 15th century, the *Tale* was copied in chronicles and miscellanea. In the 1470s–1480s a new version emerged, which was also included in the late 15th century Muscovite chronicle.⁴¹ The account remained largely the same, but some significant differences regarding Kiprian's image emerged.⁴² The introduction no longer explained the event as the tale of Temir Aksak, but rather as the tale of the icon's miracle and its arrival in Moscow.⁴³ While the main focus was the icon and its veneration, both the grand prince and the metropolitan became secondary characters. However, the two spheres of authority are better defined, and the Metropolitan Kiprian became the active force behind Church-related events, rather than enforcing Vasilii's wishes. Kiprian called the clergy and people of Moscow to pray, participated in the council which decided the icon's transfer to Moscow and he was the one advising Vasilii to build the monastery, as such a great miracle should not be forgotten. At this point, Kiprian's image began to be fashioned into the ideal representation of a metropolitan, largely disregarding the history of his initial rejection.

In the first half of the 16th century, Kiprian's image is already completely transformed, especially in Church-related sources. In the 1520s, the *Nikon* chronicle was produced at the court of Metropolitan Daniil. It was a major undertaking, aiming to present a unified history of the Rus' polities, with a great variety of sources, often rewritten, and extensive Church-related episodes, such as hagiographical episodes or tales of miracles.⁴⁴ What the account of the *Tale* did was highlight the metropolitans' defining role in key moments of Muscovite history. The complete title referenced the icon's miracle, its transfer from Vladimir to Moscow, and the invasion of Temir Aksak.⁴⁵ The succession of events remained largely similar to previous versions, with two notable additions, the intercession of Metropolitan Petr and the dream of Temir Aksak. Both episodes were related to the

⁴⁰ Sretenskii Monastery in Moscow. Its current location is different from the 14th century one.

⁴¹ For an extensive analysis of the *Tale*'s versions, see Б.М. Клосс, *Избранные труды. Т. II. Очерки по истории русской агиографии XIV–XVI веков*, Moscow, 2001, p. 64–142.

⁴² The changes in Kiprian's image in the late 15th century versions of the *Tale* were also briefly discussed by Kloss, contextualizing them within the new Muscovite ideological developments, such as the use of *samoderzhets* (autocrat) for the grand prince. *Ibidem*, p. 93–94.

⁴³ ПСРЛ 25, p. 222–225.

⁴⁴ On the history, sources and influence of the *Nikon* chronicle, see Б.М. Клосс, *Никоновский свод и русские летописи XVI–XVII веков*, Moscow, 1980.

⁴⁵ ПСРЛ 11, p. 158–161.

icon's arrival. After the icon was met by the procession led by Kiprian, it was brought to the Dormition Cathedral, described as the metropolitan church where the tomb of the wonder-working Metropolitan Petr was located. All subsequent prayers were dedicated to the Theotokos and the wonder-working metropolitan, the city's protector, an idea which built on a hagiographical tradition connecting Petr to wonder-working icons.⁴⁶ According to the first edition of his *Life*, while a monk, Petr was an icon painter. An icon of the Virgin and Child, painted by him, proved to be wonder-working when it showed itself to Gerontii, Petr's rival, announcing that God had selected the icon's painter for the office of metropolitan.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the role of metropolitans (and clergy in general) as Moscow's intercessors was emphasised by Temir Aksak's prophetic dream. While Metropolitan Kiprian was greeting the miracle-working icon, with all the clergy and the people of Moscow, Temir Aksak was sleeping in his tent. In a frightening dream, he saw a crowd of bishops with golden crosiers, blocking his path. And above them appeared a woman clothed in purple, followed by a great menacing army. Terrified by the dream, Temir Aksak decides to turn back and stop attacking Moscow. Thus, Kiprian, the metropolitan in office, was acting as the representative of an entire succession of high clergy protecting Muscovy. The importance of the *Nikon* account only grew over time, as it became the preferred basis for future chronicle compilations, such as the *Illustrated Chronicle of Ivan the Terrible* (*Litsevoi letopisnyi svod*) or the *Book of Royal Degrees* (*Stepennaia kniga*). Moreover, as the version included in the *Stepennaia kniga* reworked the *Nikon* account into a coherent narrative of the icon's origin, transfer and series of miracles, culminating with Temir Aksak's invasion, the account became part of the Muscovite ideological claims as the main authority of all Rus'.⁴⁸

Beginning with the 16th century, the iconographical representation of the arrival in Moscow of the icon of the Theotokos of Vladimir began to spread throughout the emerging empire. Its origin is assumed to be the yearly celebration of the event, on 26 August, mentioned in sources towards the end of the 15th century.⁴⁹ A small, mid-16th century icon currently kept at the Andrei Rublev Museum of Ancient Russian Culture and Art depicts the moment.⁵⁰ Two members

⁴⁶ On the veneration of wonder-working icons of the Theotokos in Rus', see A. Ebbinghaus, *Die altrussischen Marienikonen-Legenden*, Berlin, 1990.

⁴⁷ First redaction of the *Life of Petr*, mid-14th century, Б.М. Клосс, *Избранные труды. Т. II*, p. 27–31.

⁴⁸ A. Ebbinghaus, "The Compilers...", p. 178–179. Ebbinghaus also discussed in detail the possible sources, interpolations and adaptation of the *Stepennaia kniga*'s version of the *Tale of Temir Aksak*, *Ibidem*, p. 189–198. For the account's transformation in the 16th century, see also D.B. Miller, "Legends of the Icon of Our Lady of Vladimir: A Study of the Development of Muscovite National Consciousness", *Speculum*, 43, 1968, 4, p. 657–670.

⁴⁹ Б.М. Клосс, *Избранные труды. Т. II*, p. 124.

⁵⁰ https://www.icon-art.info/masterpiece.php?mst_id=4612 accessed 15.04.2024. This is also called a *piadnitsa* icon due to its size, a *piad'*, an old unit of measure defined as the distance between the index finger and the thumb of an outstretched hand (approximately 18 centimetres). For a full description of this icon, see Л.М. Евсеева, В.М. Сорокатый, Г.В. Попов, *Иконы Москвы XIV–XVI вв. Каталог собрания ЦМИАР*, Moscow, 2006, p. 209–214.

of the clergy bring the wonder-working icon of Vladimir. They are met by the Metropolitan Kiprian, followed by the Muscovite people, among the most visible ones are a prince and a woman. The metropolitan is represented with a halo, with his name above it. Behind the procession, Moscow's walls with a cathedral inside are visible. It is possibly the oldest representation of this type and it followed the iconographic model of Christ's entry into Jerusalem.⁵¹ Similar depictions of the event spread through various icons of the Theotokos with life scenes and celebrations. In the second half of the 16th century, the image of Metropolitan Kiprian meeting the wonder-working icon of the Theotokos of Vladimir was included in the scenes of icons in Vologda, Perm, Suzdal or Pskov.⁵² Although he was not always specifically named, the number of representations and their transmission could point to a widespread celebration of the feast. A shift in the event's representation appeared in the 17th century. While it became even more popular, the scene of meeting the icon of Vladimir was no longer correlated with the historical event, but rather with the annual procession which took place on 26 August, when the icon of Vladimir was taken from the Dormition Cathedral to the Sretenskii Monastery.⁵³ Thus, the textual and iconographical sources detailing Kiprian's role in the icon's arrival in Moscow and the subsequent miracle helped shape his memory, rather than the history of his appointment as metropolitan of Kyiv and all Rus'.

THE SUCCESSION OF HOLY METROPOLITANS

Beginning with the 1448 local appointment of Metropolitan Iona, the power dynamic between Constantinople and Moscow changed.⁵⁴ While during Kiprian's tenure, the patriarch remained the ultimate source of authority and legitimacy, after the second half of the 15th century the Moscow-based metropolitans used local symbols and sainthood to argue for a legitimate line of ecclesiastical succession. An essential element was the presence of the tombs of metropolitans in the

⁵¹ Л.А. Щенникова, "Сретение Владимирской иконы Богоматери в Москве в 1395 г. Исторический сюжет и особенности иконографии" in Ф.Б. Успенский et al, eds., «*Вертоград многоцветный*». Сборник к 80-летию Бориса Николаевича Флори, Moscow, 2018, p. 246–247.

⁵² Most of these representations were thoroughly analysed in Л.А. Щенникова, "Сретение", p. 249–262: two similar scenes in the icons "Resurrection – Descent into Hell, with scenes of Christ's earthly life and holidays" and "Nativity of the Mother of God, with the lives of Joachim, Anna and the Mother of God, and holidays", which Shchennikova explained as possibly having a common model (Vologda), scene in the icon of the "Theotokos of Vladimir with Tale in 18 scenes" (Perm), scene in the icon of "Theotokos of Vladimir with the Akathist" (Suzdal), scene in the representation of the "Theotokos of Vladimir with life scenes" (Pskov), image available at https://www.icon-art.info/masterpiece.php?mst_id=7478, accessed 15.04.2024.

⁵³ Л.А. Щенникова, "Сретение", p. 266. For a detailed analysis of the celebration's origins, transformation and textual sources (liturgical service), see М.Б. Плюханова, «*Кипъние свѣта*» Русские Одигитрии в литургической поэзии и в истории, St. Petersburg, 2016, p. 204–325.

⁵⁴ For a detailed history of the Moscow-based metropolitan see between the 14th and the 16th centuries, see E. Teiro, *L'Église des premiers saints métropolitans russes*, Paris, 2009.

Dormition Cathedral.⁵⁵ They visually portrayed the Moscow-based succession, beginning with Metropolitan Petr, who became a saintly protector of the city and an intercessor for his successors. His veneration developed shortly after his death turned his tomb into a pilgrimage site and a key relic of the newly built cathedral.⁵⁶ In 15th century and 16th century chronicle writing the tombs' importance was explicitly acknowledged as a preferred place for prayers, a site for miracles connected to military protection, or a symbol of a Muscovite ecclesiastical succession.⁵⁷ These arguments culminated with the 1472 discovery of the uncorrupted relics of all metropolitans buried there when the cathedral's reconstruction began.⁵⁸

Of the four pretenders who emerged after Metropolitan Aleksii's death, Kiprian was the only one buried in the Dormition Cathedral. His tomb was opened on 29 May 1472, together with those of Fotii and Iona, in a public ceremony attended by the clergy, the court and the people of Moscow. The account did not pay any particular attention to Kiprian, however, all the remains of metropolitans, including his, were called "relics" (*мощи*), both in the account of the miraculous discovery and when recounting re-burial in the newly completed Dormition Cathedral, in 1479.⁵⁹ The event had a defining impact on legitimising the locally appointed metropolitans and was construed as proof that the Muscovite ecclesiastical succession was divinely sanctioned. Although the account of the discovery of relics focused on the tombs of Petr and Iona, it also portrayed an uninterrupted succession of saintly metropolitans.⁶⁰ There is scarce evidence for an individual veneration of Kiprian. Short hagiographical texts were sometimes added for 16 September, the date of his death, in 15th and 16th century menologia. The oldest one was preserved in a Menologium from Rostov, dated 1487.⁶¹ He was

⁵⁵ With the notable exception of Aleksii's tomb, located in the Chudov Monastery, in Moscow's Kremlin. However, after the 1480s, the metropolitan was "present" in the Dormition Cathedral through his iconographic representation, with scenes from his Life. The icon was created as a pair with a similar one depicting the Metropolitan Petr and both icons were, most likely, placed on the cathedral's iconostasis. И.Е. Данилова, "Житийные иконы митрополитов Петра и Алексея из Успенского собора в Кремле в связи с русской агиографией", *Труды Отдела древнерусской литературы*, 23, 1968, p. 199–216.

⁵⁶ I have discussed the emergence and development of Metropolitan Petr's cult in "Metropolitans of All Rus', Protectors of Moscow: the Veneration of Metropolitan Petr (14th–16th century)", *Russian History* 51, 2024, p. 28–54.

⁵⁷ For example, the late 15th century Muscovite chronicle details Ivan III's pilgrimage to the tombs of all metropolitans (including Aleksii's, in the Chudov Monastery) in 1471, or Metropolitan Filipp's argument for the reconstruction of the Dormition Cathedral, as it was the previous metropolitan's resting place, while the *Nikon* Chronicle described the intercession of Metropolitan Petr in 1480, when a candle miraculously lit at his tomb before the battle on the Ugra river, against the Tatars, *ПСРЛ* 25, p. 287, 293, *ПСРЛ* 12, p. 201.

⁵⁸ *ПСРЛ* 25, p. 293–296. For the veneration of metropolitans after 1472, see Teiro, *L'Église des premiers saints métropolitains*, p. 197–227.

⁵⁹ *ПСРЛ* 25, p. 294, 325.

⁶⁰ G. Lenhoff, "The Cult of Metropolitan Iona and the Conceptualization of Ecclesiastical Authority in Muscovy", in V.V. Ivanov and J. Verkholtantsev, eds., *Speculum Slaviae Orientalis: Muscovy, Ruthenia and Lithuania in the Later Middle Ages*, Moscow, 2005, p. 122–143.

⁶¹ *Православная Энциклопедия*, том 33, Moscow, 2013, p. 641. For a list of 17th-century manuscripts containing the short anonymous *Life* of Kiprian, see Н. Дончева-Панайотова, *Киприан: старобългарски и староруски книжовник*, p. 212–213.

included in the *Great Menaion Reader* of Metropolitan Makarii, on 31 August.⁶² Kiprian's saintly memory was first and foremost related to his place in the succession of metropolitans buried in the Dormition Cathedral and the subsequent 16th century shift in the representations of the impact metropolitans had in the development of Muscovy.

During his lifetime, Kiprian had a defining influence over elements which became essential to portraying the Muscovite ecclesiastical succession, especially concerning Petr's tomb. While admonishing the Muscovites who did not support his cause, Kiprian accused them of not respecting the office and the tombs of metropolitans.⁶³ He would further develop this topic in his most important hagiographical work. In his redaction of the *Life of the wonder-working Metropolitan Petr*, Kiprian established the connection between Petr's tomb, as the site of miracles and symbol of the office, and the seat of the metropolitan, which he now held. Kiprian's redaction of Petr's *Life* expanded the narrative from the first redaction with parallels between his career and that of his saintly predecessor, with the story of Petr's glorification under Metropolitan Feognost, and with his struggles to be accepted in Moscow.⁶⁴ Moreover, Kiprian described his own acceptance in Moscow as proof of Petr's intercession, who cured his illness and helped him arrive in Moscow, to venerate the tomb of his predecessor.⁶⁵ As this redaction spread in various menaia and chronicle compilations specifically naming Kiprian as its author, it helped shape his image as a legitimate metropolitan.

In 16th century chronicles an ideal image of the Moscow-based metropolitans developed, portraying them as ideal spiritual fathers, trusted advisors and allies of the grand princes, or as the embodiment of an ecclesiastical succession line mirroring the princely one.⁶⁶ As a legitimate metropolitan, buried in the Dormition Cathedral and who played a major role in bringing the icon of Vladimir to Moscow, Kiprian's image became the embodiment of the ideal metropolitan. The *Nikon* account of the 1380 battle of Kulikovo illustrates this transition. The military confrontation between the armies led by Dmitrii Donskoi and Mamai was later considered the moment that marked the beginning of the Rus' counter-offensive against the Tatars. For this reason, it became one of the most popular and reinterpreted moments of Muscovite history. Kati Parppei's extensive study of the evolution and transformations of narratives about Kulikovo placed the *Nikon* chronicle narrative in a late rewriting stage.⁶⁷ The account encompasses all the

⁶² СККДР 2 (1), p. 470.

⁶³ РИБ 6, p. 176.

⁶⁴ For a history of the text, see P.A. Седова, "Рукописная традиция «Жития Петра» в редакции митрополита Киприана", *Труды Отдела древнерусской литературы*, 37, 1983, p. 258–268; Б.М. Клосс, *Избранные труды. Т. II*, p. 32–35.

⁶⁵ Б.М. Клосс, *Избранные труды. Т. II*, p. 35–47.

⁶⁶ Probably the pinnacle of this process was the compilation of the *Book of Royal Degrees* (*Stepennaia kniga*), which presented the history of the Riurikovitch dynasty through seventeen "degrees", each one defined through the tenure of metropolitans, see G. Lenhoff, A. Kleimola (eds.), *The Book of Royal Degrees*.

⁶⁷ K. Parppei, *The Battle of Kulikovo Refought. "The First National Feat"*, Leiden-Boston, 2017, p. 87–90.

elements connected to the intercessory role of metropolitans. The title presented the moment as a miracle happening through the mediation of the Theotokos, the wonder-working metropolitan Petr and the wonder-working Abbot Sergii of Radonezh.⁶⁸ When finding out the Tatars were approaching, Grand Prince Dmitrii went to the Dormition Cathedral to pray before the icon of the Theotokos and at Petr's tomb, and to receive Metropolitan Kiprian's blessing. He would repeat the prayer in the same order before leaving to fight, and multiple prayers and invocations were dedicated to the same saints on the battlefield. The symbolism of the intercession of the Mother of God for the Muscovites was present throughout the text. Donskoi ordered the army to gather at Kolomna on 15 August, when the Dormition of the Theotokos was celebrated, and the decisive battle took place on 8 September, the Birth of the Theotokos. The account culminated with a miraculous vision on the battle's eve. Two of Dmitrii's trusted men, Vasilii Kapitsa and Semion Antonov, saw the wonder-working Metropolitan Petr with a golden staff, destroying the army of Ethiopians, thus announcing the Muscovite victory. Throughout the account, the metropolitans in office Kiprian was presented as Donskoi's trusted advisor. The grand prince discussed with him every step he took, and showed his respect and obedience, while Kiprian acted as an ideal spiritual father, guiding Donskoi, blessing him, or offering biblical and Byzantine examples and explaining how an Orthodox prince should act. Kiprian prayed for the victory of the Muscovite army, gave long speeches of encouragement and upon the return of the victorious army, he praised Donskoi as the "new Constantine, the glorious Vladimir, the marvellous Iaroslav, the wondrous Alexander".⁶⁹

All these references become even more intriguing when taking into account that the historiographical consensus, based on previous sources, is that Kiprian was not in Moscow at the time of Kulikovo. He was called by Donskoi only a year later, in 1381, as a response to Pimen's appointment in Constantinople. The tale of the Kulikovo battle in the *Nikon* chronicle can be described, first of all, as a literary text. However, the change in attitude towards Metropolitan Kiprian cannot be explained only by the approximately one hundred years that have passed since his death and a possible loss of memory of his struggles to be accepted in Moscow. Moreover, the account included a short version of the *Tale of Mitiai*, briefly explained how Kiprian was appointed metropolitan during Aleksii's lifetime and placed the events after Pimen's appointment, thus clarifying Kiprian's presence in Moscow.⁷⁰ Possibly the most important clues are included in the narrative itself: the overwhelming importance of Metropolitan Petr's veneration and the attempt to portray an ideal line of ecclesiastical succession.

Probably the best example illustrating how the *Nikon* chronicle integrated Kiprian into a Muscovite ecclesiastical line of succession was the portrayal of his

⁶⁸ ПСРЛ 11, р. 46–68.

⁶⁹ "новый Константине, славный Владимире, дивный Ярославле, чудный Александре", *ibidem*, р. 67.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, р. 49.

demise. The account accepted the calculation of his years in office since his appointment as metropolitan in Lithuania and provided a numerical list where Kiprian was the fourth metropolitan. The chronicle recorded the metropolitan's death, on 16 September 1406, the gathering of clergy, and his burial in the Dormition Cathedral. His tenure as metropolitan of Kyiv and all Rus' was recorded as thirty years without three months. The account included Kiprian's letter (or testament), which he wrote before his death and asked to have it read out loud at his funeral. In the letter, the metropolitan himself calculated his tenure specifically since his appointment in Lithuania, on 2 December 1375.⁷¹ The Muscovite ecclesiastical succession was emphasised in the funeral account. A short excursus was added, numerically listing previous metropolitans and their burial places. The first was Petr, buried in the Dormition Cathedral, the second was the Greek Feognost, also buried there, the third was Aleksii, buried in the Chudov Monastery, and the fourth was Kiprian, considered a Serb, buried in the Dormition Cathedral.⁷²

CONCLUSION

The transformation of Kiprian's image in Muscovite sources was determined first and foremost by the shift in the representation of ecclesiastical authority. The late 15th century re-evaluation of his role as a legitimate metropolitan was not necessarily related to his merits, such as cultural contributions or impact on the organisation of the metropolitan see, but rather to the arguments for a Muscovite ecclesiastical succession. The earliest 15th century accounts of Kiprian's career give a rather neutral portrait of the contested metropolitan. Towards the end of the 15th century, the most important moment connected to his remembrance was the arrival of the icon of the Theotokos of Vladimir to Moscow, where Kiprian acted as the main representative of the Church. After the 1472 discovery of the relics of all metropolitans buried in the Dormition Cathedral, 16th century accounts focused on narratives of unity, political and ecclesiastical, and on arguments of legitimate succession.

The memory of Kiprian's struggle for office was not lost, nor was it rewritten. However, in accounts such as the *Tale of Mitiai*, no accusations were brought to Kiprian directly, as it happened in the 1380 Synodal Act, which claimed Kiprian took over the office of metropolitan in Lithuania by deceit. In fact, none of the four pretenders was given a flattering image. Mitiai was portrayed as a former parish priest unsuited for the office and supported only by the grand prince, Pimen as one who took advantage of the situation and used forged letters and bribes to

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 194–6. Kiprian's testament has reached us exclusively through chronicles and it was included in earlier accounts, *ИСПЛ* 25, p. 254–256. Teiro considered the oldest example to be the version from the *Sofia I* chronicle. E. Teiro, *L'Église des premiers saints métropolitans*, p. 76–79.

⁷² *ИСПЛ* 11, p. 194.

receive the office, while Dionisii masked his own ambition and went to Constantinople without political support. Kiprian did not appear as an active figure except for his brief 1381 tenure in Moscow. Thus, when later accounts of his deeds emerged, there was no need to write off any possible accusations. As the *Nikon* version of the Kulikovo battle showed, when incorporating material coming from different sources, the only possible concern was providing a convincing timeline.

Kiprian's image was reshaped when it became intertwined with historical moments later perceived as having a defining impact on Muscovite history. The various versions of the *Tale of Temir Aksak* which circulated beginning with the 15th century and the large number of manuscripts containing it show how the account adapted to new ideological developments. Kiprian's image was not at the forefront of these adjustments, but it was indirectly shaped by his position as metropolitan in office. As the emphasis moved towards the miracle of the icon of Vladimir, Kiprian's importance as an ideal spiritual leader grew and it became widespread and recognised as such through the annual feast on 26 August, celebrating the icon's miracle, and through the iconographic representation of the icon's arrival, met by Kiprian and the people of Moscow.

At the turn of the 16th century, the Muscovite Church had to develop extensive arguments of legitimacy, as a separate metropolitan of Kyiv in Lithuania was recognised by the patriarch of Constantinople. One solution was to argue that the sainthood of previous wonder-working Metropolitans Petr and Aleksii was proof of a divinely sanctioned Moscow-based ecclesiastical line.⁷³ The 1472 discovery of the uncorrupted relics of all metropolitans buried in the Dormition Cathedral was construed as proof of these claims. Kiprian's successful integration into a line of legitimate Moscow-based metropolitans is explicit in the *Nikon* chronicle, a text originating at the 16th century metropolitan court. When integrated into the cycle of tales about Kulikovo, he represented the ideal consensus between the metropolitan and the grand prince, it was not meant to attest to his presence in the historical event. The description of Kiprian's death and burial was aimed at portraying unity, thus the compiler accepted the metropolitan's claim for a tenure starting with his years in Lithuania.

Today, Kiprian is celebrated as a saint in the Russian Church on 16 September, the date of his death, and on 05 October, the Synaxis of the Hierarchs of Moscow. Neither holiday has late medieval roots, as a possible veneration of Kiprian as a saint after 1472 is poorly attested (but not inexistent), while his name was added to the list of Muscovite hierarch celebrated on 05 October only in 2018.

⁷³ The sainthood of his predecessors, Petr and Aleksii, was specifically used by Metropolitan Iona to assert his rights in a letter sent to the Ruthenian bishops in 1460, *PHB* 6, p. 653.

