

# THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE, A BREEDING GROUND FOR VIKING WARRIORS?

Ole Crumlin-Pedersen

## ABSTRACT

The 10th-century route along the rivers of Russia connecting the Viking world in the North and the Byzantine Empire in the South is described in some detail by Konstantin Porphyrogennetos with information on the vessels used on the Dnepr River and the Black Sea. Other sources report seaborne attacks directly on Constantinople by *Varangians* or *Rus*. These were the contemporary names for Vikings or their descendants from the Scandinavian countries, settled in Russia or coming directly from the North to win fame and fortune as members of the Emperor's Varangian guard.

On returning to their homelands, these Nordic warriors would take along valuable experience in military tactics and naval warfare. To which extent did this transfer of technology and know-how influence the maritime development in the North? The paper will explore this question, primarily through an analysis of recent discoveries of 10<sup>th</sup>- and 11<sup>th</sup>-century wrecks of warships in southern Scandinavia and in Istanbul.