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Primary Chronicle Paragraph

According to the excerpts from the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, a significant feature of the Kievan Rus' political system was that the ruler had the ability to dictate the beliefs of the people. In the *Chronicle's* narration of the Kievan state's conversion from paganism to the religion of the Greeks, there is evidence that religious freedom did not exist for any individual, save one. It was Prince Vladimir's decision to convert to a foreign religion, and this transition he also forced upon his people. First, the Prince "directed that the idols should be overthrown and that some should be cut to pieces and others burned with fire," thus completely demolishing the religion the people had already embraced. The Prince also demanded "that if any inhabitant, rich or poor, did not betake himself to the river [to be baptized], he would risk the Prince's displeasure," and in doing so gave his people little option to refuse. Therefore, through this story the *Chronicle* clearly depicts a society in which religion was completely regulated by the ruler.