

Chapter 2

THE RUS' LAND AND NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS*

ANY SOCIETY SUFFICIENTLY cohesive to evolve even the most rudimentary political structure will also as a matter of course develop a set of shared myths about the nature of that society and a justification of its political structure. Scholars usually ascribe the word “ideology” only to a set of values which is highly abstract, rational, and articulated in the form of theoretical treatises, so that in the modern period liberalism or Marxism are considered ideologies. Surely one of the most influential ideologies historians have studied is nationalism. Although an easy definition of nationalism would have to be an over-simplification, nevertheless for our purposes we can label as nationalism the belief that all social classes within a given society or people share a common set of values which distinguishes them from other societies or peoples. Whether the concept of nationalism is to be confined to nineteenth-century romantic nationalism is a controversial point.¹ Equally controversial is the tendency, or at least temptation, to project “national consciousness” back in history, modernizing earlier sets of values and identities.² It is all the more problematic to analyze mass attitudes from periods of history in which we have little if any evidence about the overwhelming majority of the population that speaks to the issue of political consciousness, such as voting behaviour or popular opinion polls.

There is no question but that the earliest East Slavic states possessed some kind of political consciousness expressed in largely undefined myths. The delicate task of the historian is to analyze without overanalyzing those terms as they appear in the sources. The risks of reading too much into the meaning of such myths available to us will be readily apparent from this discussion. The ubiquitous myth of the Rus' Land did embody some of the highest values of medieval Rus', but the asserted conclusion that it manifested national consciousness, the nationalism of a nation, the unity of the Rus' people (*narod*) and the Fatherland, for the Kievan period of the *drevnerusskaia narodnost'* (East Slavic people)³ and subsequently in the Northeast the *velikorusskaia/russkaia narodnost'* (Great Russian/Russian people) should not be accepted without critical analysis.

* Because this chapter reexamines many of the texts discussed in the previous chapter but from a different perspective, a certain amount of repetition has proven unavoidable.

1 See Michael Cherniavsky's review of Hans Rogger's *National Consciousness in Eighteenth-Century Russia* in the *American Historical Review* 66, no. 4 (July 1961): 1041–42.

2 See Cherniavsky, “Russia,” 118–43.

3 We need not consider the Soviet distinction between a “people” (*narod*) and a “nationality” (*natsional'nost'*), let alone “nation” (*natsiia*). US historians and sociologists often prefer to speak of “ethnic groups” to avoid these terminological problems.

Supporters of this conception make allowances for the importance of Christianity in the Rus' Land and for the occasional "political" manipulation of the term by the elite, but it is insisted that the national meaning remained unsullied in the consciousness of the patriotic masses.⁴ However, all modern ideologies rest on myths, so there is nothing incongruous in exploring the possibility that the Rus' Land embodied national consciousness.

However, this chapter will argue that such vocabulary is excessive and anachronistic, that there is little or no evidence in the extant written sources to support such contentions, and, furthermore, that attributing such a meaning to the concept necessarily diverts scholarly concern away from its actual and intended content. Usage of the myth of the Rus' Land from the tenth to the fifteenth centuries⁵ argues against the assertion that it reflects national consciousness.

In a seminal monograph, as already mentioned, Nasonov demonstrated that during the Kievan period the Rus' Land carried two geographic meanings. In its older and narrower sense the Rus' Land encompassed only the original Dnieper River basin, the heartland of the Kievan dynasty, a triangle formed by the cities of Kiev, Chernigov, and Pereiaslavl'. As the dynasty expanded its power, additional territories were incorporated into the Rus' Land, until, at its height, the phrase covered all regions governed by members of the Volodimerovich house. By the twelfth century, however, both meanings were operative.⁶ The adaptability of the geographic coordinates of the Rus' Land established by Nasonov suggests precisely that the myth was primarily and essentially not territorial but political, the state ruled by the Kievan dynasty. Nasonov's conclusion has not been universally accepted, but even his critics usually admit that in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries the Rus' Land had two sets of geographic boundaries.⁷

4 For example, A. V. Soloviev, "Natsional'noe samosoznanie v russkom proshlom," 25–51; S. A. Bugoslavskii, "Russkaia zemlia v literature Kievskoi Rusi, XI–XIII vv," *Uchenye zapiski MGU* 118 (1946), *Trudy kafedry russkoi literatury* 2, 3–26; D. S. Likhachev, *Natsional'noe samosoznanie drevnei Rusi* (Moscow: Nauka, 1945); Tikhomirov, "Proiskhozhdenie nazvanii 'Rusi' i 'Russkaia zemlia,'" 60–80; Cherepnin, "Istoricheskie usloviia," 7–105, one of the most nuanced and most theoretical Soviet discussions in this theme; D. S. Likhachev, *Russkie letopisi i ikh kul'turno-istoricheskoe znachenie* (Moscow: Nauka, 1947), especially 35–172, 289–330; Likhachev, "Nekotorye voprosy ideologii feodalov v literature XI–XIII v.," *Trudy otdela drevne-russkoi literatury* 10 (1954): 76–91; Likhachev, *Kul'tura Rusi vremeni Andreia Rubleva i Epifaniia Premudrogo (konets XIV–nachalo XV v.)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1962). Even the maverick I. B. Grekov implicitly subscribes to this view of the Rus' Land: I. B. Grekov, *Vostochnaia Evropa i upadok Zolotoi Ordy (na rubezhe XIV–XV vv.)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1975), 311–487.

5 Objections to treating the Rus' Land as an expression of national consciousness up to the fifteenth century apply equally to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

6 Nasonov was hardly the first historian to observe this pattern. Certainly Mykhailo Hrushevsky noticed it, although he did not distinguish between Rus' and the Rus' Land in all cases. Rather, Nasonov developed systematically and definitively what had only been noticed *en passant* in previous scholarship.

7 Various twelfth- and thirteenth-century chronicle entries use the concept of the Rus' Land in intriguing ways, often open to different interpretations. On the entry s.a. 1206 that Novgorod has superiority in the Rus' Land (*PSRL*, 1, col. 422) see Iu. A. Limonov, *Letopisanie Vladimiro-suzdal'skoi Rusi* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1967), 135–36 and A. E. Presniakov, *Obrazovanie velikoruskogo gosudarstva* (Petrograd: Bashmakov, 1918), 41–42. Cf. the entry s.a. 1216 in the *Suzdal' Chronicle*

Given the political, dynastic context of the usage of the Rus' Land entailed by Nasonov's analysis, it is quite expected that the term is pervasive in texts associated with the Kievan princes, especially the chronicle, the *Tale of Bygone Years*;⁸ the Kievan law code, the *Rus' Law (Russkaia pravda)*;⁹ and even the "church statute" of Vladimir granting a tithe to the Kievan church.¹⁰

The conversion of Vladimir to Christianity laid the basis for the Christianization of the Rus' Land. As epitomized in the vitae of Boris and Gleb in Cherniavsky's aforementioned brilliant discussion, the Rus' Land is the new *Terra Sancta*, sanctified by the blood of the princely martyrs just as Palestine was blessed by Jesus.¹¹ Given the role of the princes in the dissemination of the new religion and the highly politicized aura of the cult of Boris and Gleb in particular, this religious meaning of the Rus' Land could not really contradict the dynastic one. The Christian connotations of the Rus' Land come to the fore in the *Paterikon* of the Kievan Crypt Laura Monastery (*Pecherskaia lavra*),¹² and in the *Sermon on Law and Grace (Slovo o zakoni i blagodati)* of Metropolitan Ilarion.¹³

Two points will conclude our discussion of the Kievan period. In the *Lay of the Host of Igor'* the most convincing explanation is once again Cherniavsky's: Igor' fights for the Rus' Land in its narrower, Kievan meaning, but the author of the *Tale* appeals to all princes to assist Igor', implying—but no more—that loyalty to the Rus' Land is a biological function of the Volodimerovichi,¹⁴ the dynastic nexus originally identified by Nasonov. Secondly, none of the ideological works associated with the twelfth-century northeastern Prince Andrei Bogoliubskii ever uses the concept of the Rus' Land,¹⁵ a point to which I will return.

(*Suzdal'skaia letopis'*) in a manuscript from the late fifteenth century (*PSRL*, 1, col. 495): the whole Rus' Land (*vsia russkaia zemlia*) includes the Galician, Kievan, Smolenskan, Chernigovian, Novgorodian, and Riazanian Lands. On this passage see below, chapter 5. I do not always agree with the expliciations of these chronicle entries in Likhachev, "Nekotorye voprosy," 84–85.

8 *PVL*, 1:9, 17, 18, 82, 90–96, 126, 164–65, 170–77, 174–75. A full analysis of the references to the Rus' Land in *PVL* correlated with textological schemas of the text such as Shakhmatov's might prove very revealing.

9 *Pamiatniki russkogo prava* [hereafter *PRP*], 1 (Moscow: Iuridicheskaiia literatura, 1952), 79. Cf. Commentary, 94.

10 Ia. N. Shchapov, ed., *Drevnerusskie kniazheskie ustavy XI–XV vv.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1967), and subsequent variants. Curiously but probably insignificantly the Rus' Land does not appear in the Church Statute of Iaroslav.

11 Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People*, 5–43. Stephen Maczko, "Boris and Gleb: Sainly Princes or Princely Saints?" *Russian History* 2, no. 1 (1975): 68–80 identified a pagan layer of the cult of Boris and Gleb in the earliest expressions of their martyrdom.

12 See Index, *Das Paterikon des Kiever Höhlenklosters*, ed. D. Abramovich and D. Tschizewskij (Munich: Eidos, 1964), s.v. *Ruskaia zemlia*.

13 Ludolf Müller, *Die Werke des Metropoliten Ilarion* (Munich: Fink, 1964), 70–71. The Christian ethos of the sermon is marred by Ilarion's attribution to Vladimir of the Khazar title *kagan*, which was definitely not Christian.

14 Cherniavsky, "Russia," 119, and Robinson, "Russkaia zemlia," 123–36.

15 This is implicit in Ellen S. Hurwitz, "Andrei Bogoliubskii: An Image of the Prince," *Russian History*

The *Tale of the Destruction of the Rus' Land* written about the Mongol conquest, contains the broad geographic meaning of the Rus' Land in its Christian dress, but for the following century the contemporary chronicles usually refer to the northeast as the Suzdalian Land. The earliest redaction of Nevskii's *vita* refers only to the Suzdalian Land, as does the earliest redaction of the *vita* of Metropolitan Petr, who was buried in Moscow. By the middle of the fourteenth century the myth of the Rus' Land had reemerged, but geographically it no longer refers either to the Kievan triangle or to all of the territory of the former Kievan state. Its new content territorially was in the northeast, and later Muscovy.

The decades between the battle of Kulikovo Field in 1380 and the middle of the fifteenth century witness the coöptation and monopolization of the myth of the Rus' Land by Muscovite ideologues, the fusion of the Rus' Land with the Muscovite dynastic line and patrimony. In the epic the *Zadonschhina*, Dmitrii Donskoi fights for the Rus' Land of Moscow, Serpukhov and Kolomna, without assistance from Novgorod¹⁶ and despite the (unmentioned) alliance of Oleg of Riazan' with Emir Mamai of the Juchid ulus (later called the Golden Horde), although the Riazanian Land is mentioned as if it were separate from the Rus' Land.¹⁷ In the various tales of the sack of Moscow by Khan Tokhtamysh in 1382 the object of Tokhtamysh's attack is said to be the Rus' Land despite the collaboration with his forces of the Suzdalian princes, and Vasilii I of Moscow is warned by some anonymous "advocates of the Rus' Land" (*pobornitsy russkoi zemli*).¹⁸ In the tales of Temir-Aksak (Timur, Tamerlane) of 1395, Temir-Aksak is recorded as wanting to destroy the Rus' Land, whose autocrat is Vasilii I and whose capital is Moscow.¹⁹ The descriptions of the disastrous defeat of Vytautas, Grand Duke of Lithuania, by the Tatars at the battle on the Vorskla River in 1399, attribute to Vytautas the desire to rule the Rus' Land, and Novgorod and Pskov. Since Vytautas's rule already extended to Volhynia and Kiev, plus Smolensk, his sphere of influence to Riazan' and Tver', by the process of elimination the Rus' Land here is Moscow and its dependencies.²⁰ Similarly s.a. 1408 Emir Edigei besieges Moscow wishing to attack the Rus' Land.²¹ By the same token the

2, no. 1 (1975): 39–52; Hurwitz, *Prince Andrej Bogoljubskij: The Man and the Myth* (Florence: Licosa, 1980).

16 Despite S. N. Azbelev, "Skazanie o pomoshchi novgorodtsev Dmitriiu Donskomu," *Russkii fol'klor* 13 (1972): 77–102.

17 Halperin, "The Russian Land and the Russian Tsar," 9–22. The *Tale of the Destruction of Riazan' by Batu (Povest' o razorenii Riazani Batyem)* about the Mongol conquest of 1237, dated because of anachronisms to some time in the fourteenth century (see Charles J. Halperin, *The Tatar Yoke: The Image of the Mongols in Medieval Russia* (Bloomington: Slavica, 2009), 37–42), ambiguously juxtaposes the "Riazanian Land" and the "Rus' Land"; I infer that the former constituted a region of the latter. See *Voinskie povesti drevnei Rusi*, ed. V. P. Adrianova-Peretts (Moscow: Nauka, 1949), 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15 (from the Volokolamsk copy of the sixteenth century; the later Chronograph Copy of 1599 contains no innovations on this subject).

18 Halperin, "The Russian Land and the Russian Tsar," 44–48.

19 Halperin, "The Russian Land and the Russian Tsar," 48–52.

20 Halperin, "The Russian Land and the Russian Tsar," 52–53.

21 Halperin, "The Russian Land and the Russian Tsar," 53–57.

vita of Saint Sergius of Radonezh recounts the saint's (fictitious) blessing of Dmitrii Donskoi, ruler of the Rus' Land, in defending the Rus' Land in 1380.²²

The definitive *translatio* of the myth of the Rus' Land by Muscovite ideologues is contained in the so-called *vita* of Dmitrii Donskoi (*Slovo o zhitii i prestavlenii velikogo kniazia Dmitriia Ivanovicha, tsaria rus'kago*). Here the identification of Moscow and the Rus' Land reaches its zenith: Vladimir baptized the Rus' Land, Metropolitan Petr is the defender of the Rus' Land, Ivan Kalita, the first Muscovite grand prince, is the "gatherer of the Rus' Land" (*sobirateľ' russkoi zemli*), and Dmitrii Donskoi is tsar of the Rus' Land, his patrimony. In a paraphrase of Ilarion, recounted above, Vladimir is praised by "Kiev and surrounding cities" (which is incongruous given that he baptized the Rus' Land!) and Dmitrii Donskoi is lauded by the Rus' Land.²³

By the middle of the fifteenth century all the various strands of the ideology of the Rus' Land come together in the Muscovite tales of the Council of Florence, in which the patrimony of Vasiliu II, the Rus' Land, alone remains uncontaminated by the insidious apostasy of Isidore and the Greeks who agree to recognize the pope as their superior. The Rus' Land alone preserves true Orthodoxy.²⁴

A second negative example merits notice. In the most ambitious ideological text issuing from Tver' in the middle of the fifteenth century, the monk Foma in his laud of Boris Aleksandrovich in gingerly fashion avoids the term the Rus' Land as much as possible, in its stead attributing to Boris rule over the God-protected Tverian Land (discussed below).

It is relevant to observe here that the relationship of Novgorod to the Rus' Land seems to be ambiguous. It has been asserted that the Novgorodian sources of the Kievan period do not refer to Novgorod as part of the Rus' Land,²⁵ although references in Novgorodian and other chronicles, in both political and religious contexts, later sometimes imply at least Novgorodian affiliation with the Rus' Land.²⁶ It is perhaps Novgorodian reluctance to recognize any northeastern grand prince as ruler of the Rus' Land which explains the absence of the term in Novgorodian treaties with the grand princes until 1456, discussed below. Or this reticence may reflect a reaction against the nonlegal, more ideological or more pretentious element of the myth, since it is equally conspicuous by its absence in Muscovite grand princely wills. Even the Muscovite accounts of the subordination of Novgorod in 1471, while vaguely alluding to the Rus' Land, do not seem to accuse the Novgorodians of "treason" to the Rus' Land, although the Novgorodians are guilty of apostasy, arrogance, violating tradition, and disloyalty to the grand prince.²⁷

²² Halperin, "The Russian Land and the Russian Tsar," 70.

²³ Halperin, "The Russian Land and the Russian Tsar," 69–78.

²⁴ Michael Cherniavsky, "The Reception of the Council of Florence in Moscow," *Church History* 24, no. 4 (December 1955): 347–59.

²⁵ A. S. L'vov, *Leksika "Povesti o vremennykh let"* (Moscow: Nauka, 1975), 179–82.

²⁶ For example, *Novgorodskaiia pervaiia letopis' starshego i mladshego izvodov*, ed. A. N. Nasonov [hereafter *NPL*] (Moscow: Nauka, 1950), 33 s.a. 1169, 89 s.a. 1270, 374 s.a. 1376.

²⁷ *PSRL*, 25:284ff.

We have seen that the concept of the Rus' Land operated as a dominant political myth in Rus' from the tenth to the fifteenth centuries in a variety of separate, if interconnected, ways. Possessing both dynastic and religious overtones, the Rus' Land seems to have been most flexible in its geographic boundaries, alternating in the Kievan period between narrow and broad meanings, and then shifting in toto to the northeast, where it came to be synonymous with the Muscovite grand principality. Can we infer from the pattern of usage sketched here that the myth reflects national consciousness? A number of considerations need to be taken into account.

First, unlike in my original discussion of this question, I do not think that the religious element can impugn the argument that the myth of the Rus' Land in the Kievan period represents popular (*narodnyi*) attitudes at all. At that time the overwhelming majority of the population remained pagan. To judge from the written and archeological evidence, I suspect that this would remain the case until at least the fourteenth century, when the archeological evidence of paganism finally disappears from the countryside. I know of no proponent of the view that the Rus' Land is Christian *and* national who has ever perceived, let alone rationalized, this glaring contradiction.²⁸ However, if the myth of the Rus' Land contained both pagan and Christian layers then the non-Christian population might have subscribed to it. The powerful connection between national identities and religious affiliation need not have existed in a recently converted country. At the same time, to follow Paszkiewicz in interpreting the wider meaning of the Rus' Land as exclusively ecclesiastical, the confines of the metropolitanate of Kiev and all Rus' (*Kiev i vseia Rusi*), still seems unwarranted.²⁹ It would be difficult to reconcile such a view with the declaration of the pagan Turkic Berendei of loyalty to the Rus' Land s.a. 1154,³⁰ and with the ambivalence of the relationship between Novgorod and the Rus' Land.³¹ No one has ever explained why and how Turkic nomads could belong to the Rus' "nation."

Secondly, to correlate usage of the Rus' Land and patriotism might seem to suggest that princes whose ideological expressions do not utilize the Rus' Land were "unpatriotic," a position on the twelfth century which dates from Vasilii Kliuchevskii at least.³² Such an interpretation of the works associated with Andrei Bogoliubskii and Boris Aleksandrovich strikes me as distorted, in part because we do not really know very much

28 This criticism does not apply to Cherniavsky, who conceives of the Rus' Land as Christian but denies the existence of true national consciousness in Rus'/Muscovy until the seventeenth century.

29 Henryk Paszkiewicz, *The Origin of Russia* (London: Allen & Urwin, 1954), especially 3–25, and Paszkiewicz, *The Making of the Russian Nation*, 51–55, 74–76, 204ff. Paszkiewicz's idiosyncratic interpretation has found little if any support among specialists.

30 *PSRL*, 1, col. 345.

31 Ironically Novgorod's exclusion from the Rus' Land is clearest during the Kievan period when its ecclesiastical dependence on Kiev was strongest. There is more evidence of Novgorodian affiliation with the Rus' Land when its archbishop was resisting Muscovite ecclesiastical influence via the metropolitan in Vladimir and then Moscow in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

32 Might not this line of reasoning explain Kliuchevskii's distorted image of Andrei Bogoliubskii as a narrow-minded petty *votchinnik* (patrimonial landowner)? See V. O. Kliuchevskii, *Kurs russkoi istorii*, 8 vols. (Moscow: Politicheskaiia literatura, 1956), 1:190–205, 316–34.

about “provincialism” and “separatism” in the Kievan and appanage periods. Although we cannot establish with any certainty why Andrei Bogoliubskii did not invoke the Rus' Land,³³ the Tverian case is crystal clear. By the time Foma composed his work, the Muscovite stranglehold on the myth of the Rus' Land was simply too strong to break. Patriotism and national consciousness are irrelevant considerations in both instances.

The ideological constraints on Tver' stand out when viewed through the prism of Muscovite ideological success. Likhachev, above all, has argued that the revival of the concept of the Rus' Land in the northeast, especially Muscovy, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, constitutes not only a renaissance of Kievan historical tradition, but also a resurgence of national consciousness following a period of feudal decentralization. This is to confuse ideological pretension with patriotism. The Rus' Land was a source of political and historical legitimacy, and Muscovite usage of it is best characterized as manipulative. Significantly, the Lithuanian, admittedly Orthodox, Olgerdovich princes fight for the Rus' Land in the *Zadonshchina* as vassals of Dmitrii Donskoi. That Muscovite sources identified its own interests with the Rus' Land does not require us to accept such self-serving claims at face value. Not even all of the northeast is meant by the Rus' Land in Muscovite texts, let alone all of Kievan Rus',³⁴ simply the Muscovite principality. Despite the obvious fact that the Rus' Land has this territorial meaning during this period,³⁵ the tendency has been to substitute modern patriotic verbiage for historical analysis in evaluating it. The *translatio* of the Rus' Land to Muscovy remains largely unappreciated in scholarship.

Soviet scholars no less than post-Soviet Russian nationalist scholars were aware that all of the texts in which the Rus' Land appears represent the articulated point of view of the elite, whether lay or ecclesiastic, and therefore are tainted by the class interests of the feudal ruling class. Nevertheless, ostensibly these texts also convey popular attitudes, admittedly when it served the elite's purpose to do so, from which it is legitimate to infer national devotion to the Rus' Land. I am prepared to admit, theoretically, that elite-serving texts might embody popular attitudes, and in particular that the *Tale of Bygone Years* contains material probably of oral, folkloric, and perhaps popular origin, although oral folklore need not all have originated in the masses rather than as the lore of the elite itself. But in any event no such passage, to my knowledge, ever invokes the Rus' Land, and I do not see how to discover the object of popular patriotism in the absence of evidence. Relying on the “pure” folkloric evidence, the most obvious alternative, will not suffice here. By the time the *byliny*³⁶ were written down the object of loyalty

33 Bogoliubskii's ideology was constructed out of Kievan building blocks, if only to neutralize Kiev's status, such as a *translatio* of the Icon of the Virgin and its protection from Kiev (originally from Constantinople, of course) to Vladimir-on-the-Kliazma. But given the geographic malleability of the concept of the Rus' Land, it is a mystery why Bogoliubskii's ideologues did not attempt to translate the myth of the Rus' Land to the Northeast, as the Muscovites later succeeded in doing.

34 Charles J. Halperin, “Kiev and Moscow: An Aspect of Early Muscovite Thought,” *Russian History* 7, no. 3 (1980): 312–21.

35 See the Index to *PSRL*, 25:443, s.v. *rusaskaia zemlia*.

36 This begs the enormously complicated and not definitively resolved methodological and

in them is Holy Rus' (*Sviataia Rus'*), long after the Kievan and even Mongol period, in the seventeenth century.³⁷ It would be foolish speculation to guess what term preceded it in the epic cycle.³⁸ The data at our disposal speak only to the question of elite political consciousness of the Rus' Land, not popular consciousness.³⁹

And there can scarcely be any doubt that the Rus' Land does embody elite political consciousness, indeed patriotism. For a myth to be worth manipulating—and I do not believe it credible that medieval ideologues were wasting their time—it first of all has to exist in the minds of an intended audience, it has to constitute a shared object of value by a given social group. Clearly the Rus' Land was such a myth, and remained so well beyond the period under discussion here. The most effective proof I would adduce of the genuine adherence of the elite to the myth of the Rus' Land is two previously unmentioned texts. The Abbot (*igumen*) Daniel in the early twelfth century lit a candle at the Holy Sepulcher in Palestine in honour of the entire Rus' Land.⁴⁰ In the middle of the fifteenth century the Tverian merchant Afanasii Nikitin, in his travelogue to India, projected his anguished patriotic homesickness, compounded of religious and secular sentiments, on the Rus' Land,⁴¹ and this at a time when the Tverian political establishment had to defer to Muscovite monopolization of that myth. These two authors had no institutional or political axe to grind, unlike the other texts adduced above, and therefore they constitute the most telling exceptions to the rule that the myth of the Rus' Land was an ideological football from the tenth to the fifteenth centuries. I think that these two cases illustrate why the myth would be utilized to enhance the prestige and status of a princely house.

conceptual problems of the social origin of the *byliny*, either folk or elite: Felix J. Oinas, "The Problem of the Aristocratic Origin of the *Byliny*," *Slavic Review* 30, no. 3 (September 1971): 513–22.

37 This dating depends upon Cherniavsky's argument that the phrase is an interpolation in Kurbsky's *History*. If Kurbsky's *History* originated in the seventeenth century, then it is still true. See Michael Cherniavsky, "Holy Russia: A Study in the History of an Idea," *American Historical Review* 63, no. 4 (April 1958): 617–37 and Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People*, 101–27.

38 While the emotional attachments of the "folk" to a particular territory and its features such as Mother Volga need not be denied, most often no political identity is assigned to that geographic zone, hence the impossibility of interpreting such terminology as evidence of political or national consciousness.

39 Dimitar Angelov, "Patriotism in Medieval Bulgaria (9th–14th centuries)," *Bulgarian Historical Review* 4, no. 2 (1976): 22–45 is a nuanced exposition of a related problem which is slightly more sophisticated but still consistent with Soviet scholarship on the problem of the Rus' Land. Angelov proposes to evaluate the patriotism of the masses on the basis of behaviour, that is, heroic defence versus foreign invaders. However, discriminating between patriotism and self-defence is not easy. Since such activity is inarticulate, in any event the ideological object of whatever patriotism is present cannot be identified.

40 Abbot Daniil, *Wallfahrtbericht—Khozhenie*, ed. K. D. Seeman (1864; repr. Munich: Fink, 1970), 1, 128 (cited passage).

41 *Khozhenie za tri moria Afanasiia Nikitina 1466–1472 goda* (Moscow: Nauka, 1948), *passim* both text and accompanying articles and commentary. With some trepidation I am accepting here the translation of a key passage—the Rus' Land is just, except for its boyars—from the original "Turkic"; see text, 25, commentary, 188–89n282.

Although I would not deny the existence of notions of “ethnicity” among all medieval East Slavs, nevertheless I should like to suggest that the one sense in which the Rus' Land is never used is precisely ethnic. Contrasts between the Rus' Land and the Greek Land (*Grecheskaia zemlia*, or later more accurately *Grecheskoe tsarstvo*, Greek Empire), the Byzantine Empire, do not constitute an ethnic distinction but a political, statist one. After all, the Byzantine Empire, however Greek in language and culture, was abundantly multi-ethnic, and it is beyond credulity that visitors from Kievan Rus' would not have observed the diverse population elements in Constantinople, to which they in fact contributed. Thinking about the social groups whose adherence to the Rus' Land is known—merchants, clerics, nobles, princes—we should not be too disturbed to see no ethnic connotation to the term.⁴² The clergy included Greeks as well as South Slavs; merchants certainly dealt with resident foreign merchants—Jews, Greeks, Armenians, Syrians, and others—although whether they belonged to the East Slavic merchantry is moot; princely retinues were of amazingly—or not so amazingly—diverse ethnic origins, Turkic, Scandinavian, and Slavic;⁴³ and the “masses” of the population of Kievan and Muscovite Rus' with which the elite dealt, as unruly taxpayers, obstreperous subjects, or undisciplined congregants, surely included sizable Finno-Ugric elements. The Rus' Land to which Berendei and Olgerdovichii could pledge loyalty was hardly ethnic.

It is not merely that ascribing national consciousness to the myth of the Rus' Land during the tenth to fifteenth centuries is at best dubious and unproven, if not unprovable. Rather, by relegating the actual employment of the term in our elite sources to secondary importance as the misuse of a hypothesized, unattested, and itself near-mythical medieval nationalism, this misconception obscures the actual content of the myth and seriously inhibits scholarly investigation of its complex evolution. It is because so many scholars have so blithely assumed that the meaning of the Rus' Land was obviously “nationalist” that so little serious research about its real significance has been done.

42 The Rus' Land could function as a social term, as in “the Rus' Land rejoiced,” meaning that the *people* living in the Rus' Land rejoiced, but that does not entail that those “people” belonged to a single “nation,” and in any event in such cases the actual reference is not to all the people, the people of all social classes, but to the elite.

43 On the object of the loyalty of the Muscovite service classes see S. B. Veselovskii, *Issledovaniia po istorii klassa sluzhilykh zemlevladel'tsev* (Moscow: Nauka, 1969), 474–75.

