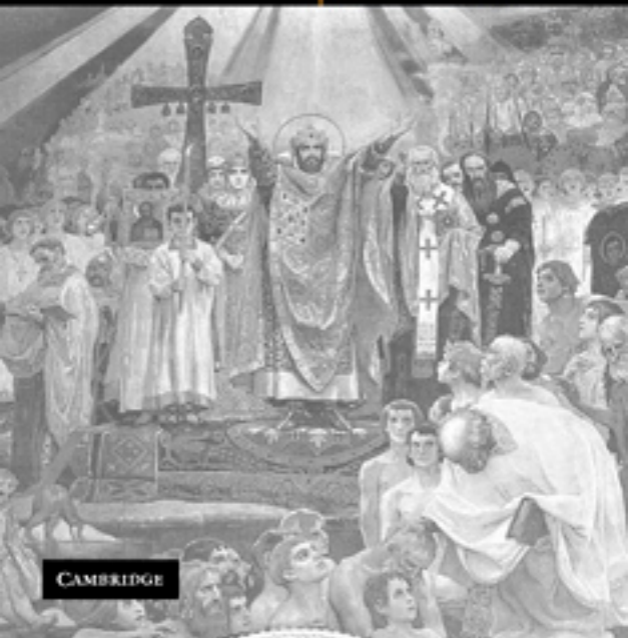


THE ORIGINS OF THE SLAVIC NATIONS

Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus

SERHII PLOKHY



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The Origins of the Slavic Nations

The latest developments in the countries of eastern Europe, including the rise of authoritarian tendencies in Russia and Belarus, as well as the victory of the democratic “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine, pose important questions about the origins of the East Slavic nations and the essential similarities or differences between their cultures. This book traces the origins of the modern Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian nations by focusing on premodern forms of group identity among the Eastern Slavs. It also challenges attempts to “nationalize” the Rus’ past on behalf of existing national projects, laying the groundwork for a new understanding of the premodern history of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. The book covers the period from the Christianization of Kyivan Rus’ in the tenth century to the reign of Peter I and his eighteenth-century successors, by which time the idea of nationalism had begun to influence the thinking of East Slavic elites.

SERHII PLOKHY is Professor of History and associate director of the Peter Jacyk Centre at the University of Alberta. His numerous publications on Russian and Ukrainian history include *The Cossacks and Religion in Early Modern Ukraine* (2001), and *Unmaking Imperial Russia: Mykhailo Hrushevsky and the Writing of Ukrainian History* (2005).

The Origins of the Slavic Nations

*Premodern Identities in Russia,
Ukraine, and Belarus*

Serhii Plokhy



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To Maryna

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Preface

I did not intend to write this book. I was working on another project pertaining to modern history when questions related to the premodern identities of the Eastern Slavs slowly but surely took over most of my time and attention. Looking at the major modern narratives of East Slavic history, I suddenly realized that perceptions of the premodern Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians, both in their homelands and in the West, are still shaped by the views of national historians and the paradigms they created. While historians studying individual periods and topics of East Slavic history have made significant progress over the past century, the main national paradigms have survived both Soviet repression and the emigration of the bearers of national historiographic traditions to the West. Since the fall of the USSR, those paradigms have reappeared in the East Slavic lands and even blossomed on the ruins of Soviet historiography.

“Has anybody done better since the Depression?” asked the wife of an acquaintance of mine who was preparing a talk on the Ukrainian national historian, Mykhailo Hrushevsky (1866–1934). “Well, frankly, no,” was the answer he gave. I asked myself the same question, broadening its range from Hrushevsky to the entire field of Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian historiography. I also had to extend the chronological scope of the question, starting not with the Depression but with the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5 and the Revolution of 1905 in the Russian Empire. It was then that Hrushevsky published the first twentieth-century outline of Ukrainian history; the patriarch of Russian historiography, Vasiliï Kliuchevsky, began to issue his *Survey of Russian History*; and Belarusian national historiography began to emerge from the shell of Russian imperial history. The answer to my question was equally negative. In the last hundred years, no one had done it better, nor had any approach to the “nationalization” of the past improved significantly on the achievements of those two outstanding scholars. In the end, I could not resist the urge to take a fresh look at the dominant versions of premodern Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian history and try to denationalize and update

them according to the standards of contemporary historical scholarship. In order to do so, it turns out, I had to write this book.

I could not have written it without the support offered me (intentionally or not) by many individuals and institutions – at times they, too, were under the impression that I was working on a different project altogether. I would like to offer individual thanks to those who helped me most. My special thanks go to Myroslav Yurkevich for his support, tactful advice, and thorough editing of my Ukrainglish prose. Advice from Roman Szporluk, Blair Ruble, Terry Martin, and Timothy Snyder was instrumental in shaping the scope of this book and my analytical approach. So were the comments of Volodymyr Kulyk, who, for good reason, advised me against writing this work. I am also grateful to Frank E. Sysyn and Zenon E. Kohut for sharing their insights on the history of early modern Ukrainian texts and identities, as well as books and copies of articles from their personal libraries. Also very helpful were discussions with Natalia Yakovenko, Charles J. Halperin, Michael S. Flier, and Edward L. Keenan on early modern Russian and Ukrainian identities. Paul Bushkovitch, Simon Franklin, Valerie Kivelson, Don Ostrowski, Oleksii Tolochko, Olena Rusyna, and Michael Moser read individual chapters of the book and gave me excellent advice on how to improve them. I would also like to thank participants in the Workshop on Cultural Identities at the University of Alberta – John-Paul Himka, Jelena Pogosjan, Natalia Pylypiuk, Oleh Ilnytzkyj, Heather Coleman, and Peter Rolland – for their comments on chapters originally presented at meetings of the workshop. Parts of chapters 7 and 8 originally appeared in my article “The Two Russias of Teofan Prokopovyč,” published in *Mazepa e il suo tempo. Storia, cultura, società / Mazepa and His Time: History, Culture, Society* (Alessandria, 2004), pp. 334–66. I thank Giovanna Brogi Bercoff for her advice on the content of the article and the editor of the volume, Giovanna Siedina, for permission to reprint parts of it in this book.

I am also greatly indebted to participants in the Humanities Program of the American Council of Learned Societies in Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, especially to the members of the Carnegie Selection Committee with whom I was privileged to work in 2003–6: Andrzej Tymowski, William Rosenberg, Joan Neuberger, and administrative assistant Olga Bukhina. My work in the program gave me a unique opportunity to meet with leading Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian scholars working on topics closely related to the subject of this book. My research was sponsored by a grant from the Ukrainian Studies Fund, Inc. (New York), and I would like to express my deep appreciation to the director of the Fund, Roman Procyk, for supporting this project. I thank Michael Watson, commissioning editor for history at Cambridge University Press, for guiding

the manuscript through the review and acceptance process. At CUP my thanks also go to Isabelle Dambricourt, Jackie Warren, and Jacqueline French for their help with the editing of the manuscript. I am also grateful to the two anonymous reviewers of the book, whose suggestions I took into account in preparing the final version of the manuscript. I would also like to acknowledge the kind assistance of Viktor Brekhunenko, who helped me with copyright issues in Ukraine. As always, I thank Peter Matilainen for his help in solving computer problems. My special thanks go to my family in Canada and Ukraine.

Note on transliteration, dates, and translations

In the text of this book, the modified Library of Congress system is used to transliterate Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian personal names and toponyms. This system omits the soft sign (ь) and, in masculine personal names, the final “й” (thus, for example, Ostrozky, not Ostroz’kyi). In bibliographic references, the full Library of Congress system (ligatures omitted) is used, and the titles of publications issued after 1800 are given in modernized spelling. Toponyms are usually transliterated from the language of the country in which the designated places are currently located. As a rule, personal names are given in forms characteristic of the cultural traditions to which the given person belonged. If an individual belonged to (or is claimed by) more than one national tradition, alternative spellings are given in parentheses. In this case, as in the use of specific terminology related to the history of the Eastern Slavs and titles of east European officials and institutions, I follow the practice established by the editors of the English translation of Mykhailo Hrushevsky’s *History of Ukraine-Rus’*.¹

The Julian calendar used by the Eastern Slavs until 1918 lagged behind the Gregorian calendar used in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and western Europe (by ten days in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and by eleven days in the eighteenth century). Dates in this study are generally given according to the Julian calendar; where both styles appear concurrently, the Gregorian-calendar date is given in parentheses, e.g., 13 (23) May.

Translations within the text are my own unless a printed source is cited.

¹ Cf. editorial prefaces and glossary in Mykhailo Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus’*, ed. Frank E. Sysyn et al., vol. VII (Edmonton and Toronto, 1999), xix–xxvi, liii–lvi.

Maps



1. Kyivan Rus'

(Source: Zenon E. Kohut, Bohdan Y. Nebesio, and Myroslav Yurkevich, *Historical Dictionary of Ukraine* [Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2005].)



2. Rus' principalities ca. 1100

(Source: *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Russia and the Former Soviet Union* [Cambridge, 1994].)

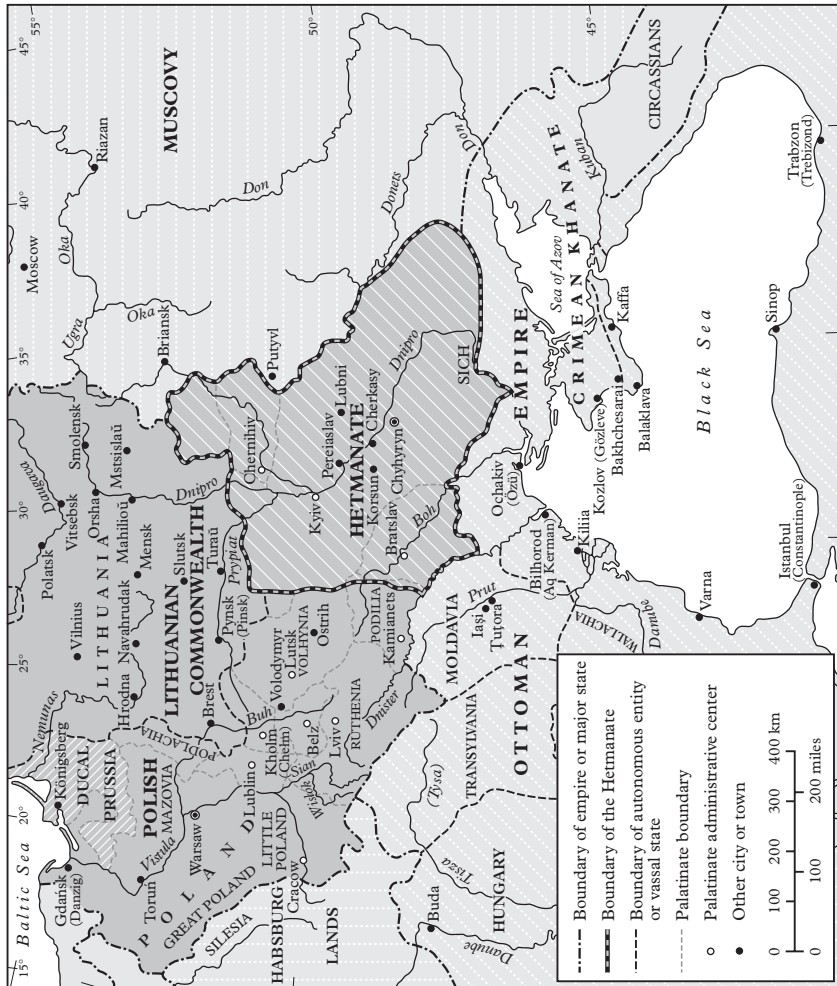


3. Muscovy in the fifteenth–sixteenth centuries

(Source: *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Russia and the Former Soviet Union* [Cambridge, 1994].)



4. Lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries
 (Source: *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, ed. Volodymyr Kubijovyč and Danylo Husar Struk, vol. IV [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993].)



5. Cossack Ukraine ca. 1650

(Source: Mykhailo Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus'*, ed. Frank E. Sysyn et al., vol. IX, bk. 1 [Edmonton and Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2005].)



6. The Cossack Hetmanate in the mid-eighteenth century
 (Source: Zenon E. Kohut, *Russian Centralism and Ukrainian Autonomy: Imperial Absorption of the Hetmanate, 1760s–1830s* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1988].)

Introduction

The disintegration of the USSR in 1991 and the emergence of fifteen independent nation-states on its ruins demonstrated to the outside world that the Soviet Union was not Russia, despite the best efforts of the Western media to convince its readers to the contrary by using the two terms interchangeably for decades. Political developments in the post-Soviet space indicated that the definition of the USSR as Russia was wrong not only in relation to the non-Slavic republics of the former Soviet Union but also with regard to the Ukrainians and Belarusians, the East Slavic cousins of the Russians. Each of the three newly independent states manifested its own character and chose its own path in the turbulent transition from communism. After a lengthy period of political uncertainty and economic chaos, Russia opted for the construction of a strong state with clear authoritarian tendencies and assumed the role of a regional superpower. Belarus, after a brief period of democratic development, refused to reform its political and economic system and took refuge in Soviet-style ideology and Stalin-era authoritarianism. Ukraine, on the other hand, after long hesitation between East and West, underwent a popular revolution in defense of democratic principles and embarked on a pro-Western course with the goal of joining the European Union. For all the salient differences between these three post-Soviet nations, they have much in common when it comes to their culture and history, which goes back to Kyivan (Kievan) Rus', the medieval East Slavic state based in the capital of present-day Ukraine.

Soviet historians often portrayed Kyivan Rus' as the common cradle of the three East Slavic nations. According to that logic, not unlike the builders of the Tower of Babel, the Eastern Slavs originally constituted one Old Rus' nationality or ethnicity that spoke a common language. It was only the Mongol invasion that divided the people of Rus' and set them on separate paths of development, which eventually led to the formation of three modern nations. The competing view, advanced by imperial Russian historians and shared by some authors in present-day Russia, claims Kyivan Rus' history for one indivisible Russian nation, of which

Ukrainians and Belarusians are considered mere subgroups, distinguished not by separate cultures and languages but by variants of Russian culture and dialects of the Russian language. Ukrainian national historiography, on the contrary, treats Kyivan Rus' as an essentially Ukrainian state and claims that the differences between Russians and Ukrainians were apparent and quite profound even then. That viewpoint finds some support among Belarusian historians, who seek the roots of their nation in the history of the Polatsk principality of Kyivan times. Who is right and who is wrong? What are the origins of the three modern East Slavic nations? These are the questions that informed my research and discussion of the origins of modern Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus.¹

There is little doubt in my mind that the Kyivan-era project involving the construction of a single identity had a profound impact on the subsequent identities of all the ethnic groups that constituted the Kyivan state. That project defined the parameters of the Rus' legacy, which still forms the basis of the cultural commonalities between the three East Slavic nations. I regard the post-Kyivan Eastern Slavs as a group of distinct communities that possessed and developed their own identities. The number of my premodern East Slavic communities that emerged on the ruins of the Kyivan state is smaller than seventy-two – the number of peoples into which God divided humankind by assigning different languages to the audacious constructors of the Tower of Babel. But it is certainly greater than the number of nationalities or ethnicities suggested either by the proponents of one Old Rus' (alternatively, Russian) nationality or by those who claim that there were three separate East Slavic nations from the very beginning. The approach that I have taken in studying the historical roots of the modern Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians is based on the identification and reconstruction of lost structures of group identity among the Eastern Slavs. I am particularly interested in those types of identity that can be interpreted as more or less distant precursors of modern national identity. My point of departure is the assumption that there can be no ethnicity or nation without a distinct identity, and finding the roots of that identity is in many ways tantamount to uncovering the roots of the nation itself.

This book covers the period from the tenth-century Christianization of Kyivan Rus' to the mid-eighteenth century, when the idea of nationalism

¹ On the competing interpretations of Kyivan Rus' history in modern Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian historiography, see Andrew Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation* (New Haven and London, 2000), pp. 1–11; Taras Kuzio, "Historiography and National Identity among the Eastern Slavs: Towards a New Framework," *National Identities* 3, no. 2 (2001): 109–32. A detailed discussion of these interpretations appears in the historiographic sections of each of the eight chapters of this book.

had begun to influence the thinking of East Slavic elites. As noted in the preface, the idea of writing this book came out of my dissatisfaction with the treatment of the premodern history of the Eastern Slavs in current historical literature. University textbooks and popular literature on the subject are still dominated by concepts formed at the turn of the twentieth century and rooted in “primordialist” efforts to read the modern nation back into the past. My book challenges attempts to “nationalize” the East Slavic past on behalf of existing modern nations by focusing on the development of premodern identities.

History as a scholarly discipline took shape in the era of nationalism. That factor alone burdened all the major narratives of the era with the task of nationalizing the pre-1800 past and thereby legitimizing the rise and continuing existence of modern nations and nation-states. This approach met with serious criticism in the second half of the twentieth century, primarily on the part of “modernists” – historians and social scientists who argued that there were no nations prior to the modern era.² In the ongoing debate between modernists and “primordialists” I take the side of the former, subscribing at the same time to the critique of the “modernists” by the “revisionists,” who seek the origins of nationhood in premodern times or point out the ethnic origins of modern nations. Following in the footsteps of John A. Armstrong, Anthony D. Smith, Adrian Hastings, and other “revisionists,” I claim that the origins of modern nations are to be found in premodern national communities, or ethnicities, which I often call “nationalities” (in the tradition of East Slavic historiography) and to which Smith refers as *ethnies*.³ I adopt Adrian Hastings’s definition of ethnicity as a “group of people with a shared cultural identity and spoken language.” I also subscribe to his broad definition of the nation as “a far more self-conscious community” that, being “[f]ormed from one or more ethnicities, and normally identified by a literature of its own . . . possesses or claims the right to political identity and autonomy as a people, together with the control of specific territory . . . in a world thought of as one of nation states.”⁴

² Among the most influential “modernist” works of the last few decades are Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983); and Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, 1990).

³ See Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1986). For other attempts to extend the life of nations to premodern times, see John A. Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1982) and Anthony W. Marx, *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (New York, 2003).

⁴ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 1–4.

Although premodern ethnicities were of course different from nations of the modern era, I argue that the identities associated with both types of community were products of very similar identity-building projects. In that sense I agree with Anthony D. Smith's assertion that constituent elements of premodern "identities and cultures – the myths, memories, symbols, and values – can often be adapted to new circumstances by being accorded new meanings and new functions" within the framework of nation-building projects.⁵ The essentials of premodern ethnicity, which, according to Smith, include a collective name, a common myth of origins, a shared history, a distinctive culture, association with a particular territory, and a sense of solidarity, are very similar to the constituent elements of nations,⁶ and so, I would argue, are the two types of identity. Not only does national identity develop out of the constituent elements of ethnic identity, but the latter is often defined by loyalty to common culture and mythology, as well as to common political institutions, which some students of the subject reserve for modern national identity alone. It was the realization of this close connection between ethnic (proto-national) and national types of identity that led me to study them in tandem. That connection also prompted me to use the term "ethnonational" as the basic category of my analysis, since it is applicable to premodern and modern identity-building projects alike.

In my research on the history of Eastern Slavic identities, I have drawn on methods developed both by "modernists" and by "revisionists." The idea that the national narratives whereby modern societies define themselves are products of the "nationalization" of the past by historians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries comes directly from the modernist arsenal. I also accept the definition of nations as "imagined communities" proposed by the "modernist" Benedict Anderson and subscribe to his maxim that national identities are formulated and sustained in cultural texts. Unlike the "modernists," however, I extend this approach to the study of premodern communities, stressing the medieval and early modern origins of nations and national ideologies. In that sense, this book is a contribution to the growing "revisionist" literature that posits the existence of nations before nationalism. It renationalizes the past by stressing the importance of the ethnonational factor in premodern history. At the same time, it declines to read modern nationalism back into the past and rejects "primordialist" assumptions about the millennial history of present-day nations. Instead, I delve into the construction of medieval and early modern identities and track changes in their structures and meanings. In the process, I attempt to show how the

⁵ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, p. 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 22–31.

imagined communities of the premodern era differed from their modern-day successors.

My approach to “identity,” a concept central to the book, is “soft” in the sense defined by Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper. It is influenced by poststructuralist and postmodernist thought and generally conforms to the definition of the term adopted in recent studies on ethnicity and nationalism. Thus I understand identity as a phenomenon that manifests itself in collective and individual consciousness and action. I also regard it as a “situationalist” phenomenon, a constantly changing construct produced by the interaction of a number of discourses. Crucial to my approach, as noted above, is the assumption that every ethnic or national community must have a concept of common identity to qualify for the status of either ethnicity or nation.⁷

The terms “ethnicity” and “nationality,” like most terms used in present-day social analysis, are inventions of modern times. In studying the Eastern Slavs, nineteenth-century linguists and ethnologists identified three major ethnic groups or, in their terminology, nationalities: Great Russian, Little Russian (Ukrainian), and Belarusian. But they also admitted major linguistic and cultural differences within those nationalities, and often the lack of clearly defined borders between them. The conclusion that emerges from an examination of the linguistic and ethnographic material is quite simple. The ethnic classifications themselves were the result of outside interference – in other words, they were constructed – while the borders of those ethnicities were created by stressing the differences between nationalities and downplaying the fault lines within them. My research suggests that the division of communities into ethnicities and nations is not always a very helpful analytical tool. On the level of identity-building projects and collective identities, the line between the two is blurred, and the division of human history into ethnic and national phases simplifies and distorts that history more than it promotes understanding.

Consequently, as explained above, I often fuse the two categories by applying the term “ethnonational” in the text of this book. I have also adopted the practice of categorizing nations as modern and premodern, introducing “premodern nation” along with “ethnicity” as one of the main terms of my analysis. I use this term to denote premodern communities that acquired many but not all of the characteristics of the modern nation. At various times, nations have been defined in terms of culture, language, religion, territory, and polity, to list the most obvious factors.⁸

⁷ See Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1–47, here 1–8.

⁸ On the changing meanings of “nation,” see Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), pp. 4–9.

Thus, while drawing a distinction between premodern communities and modern nations, I do not shy away from the term “nation,” which occurs in some of my early modern sources, in discussing the premodern history of the Eastern Slavs. I employ “nation” quite consistently when discussing developments after the turn of the seventeenth century, as I consider the Ruthenian and Muscovite communities of the time to be the first East Slavic groups that possessed the characteristics of a premodern nation. They constituted a type of community that did not offer membership in its ranks to the whole population of its territory, limiting it to members of the elite, but managed to formulate its identity outside (or concurrently with) the concept of loyalty to the ruler or dynasty.

Dealing with premodern East Slavic identities means following the development of a number of Rus’ identities. In spite of their profound differences, the creators and bearers of all these identities connected them with the name of Rus’, which denotes both the land and the people. For the sake of clarity, I use different names for these various types of Rus’-based identities. While I refer to most of the medieval East Slavic identities as Rus’ or Rus’ian, I follow established English-language practice in switching from “Rus’” to “Ruthenia” when discussing Ukraine and Belarus after the incorporation of the Rus’ lands into the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the second half of the fourteenth century. I switch from “Rus’” to “Muscovy” to denote the territories of Northeastern and Northwestern Rus’ that were annexed to the Grand Duchy of Moscow in the second half of the fifteenth century. I speak of Ukrainian (Little Russian) identity starting with the second half of the seventeenth century, and I refer to (Great) Russian and Russian imperial identities from the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The political and ecclesiastical elites whose members were largely responsible for the identity-building projects discussed in this book left a significant number of texts that shed light on the development of ethnonational identity. The effect of those elite projects can be measured by their impact on communal identities, and it is here that problems begin to multiply. In many cases, no full investigation of that impact can be undertaken for lack of sources. Although I have tried to pay as much attention as possible to manifestations of ethnonational identity among rank-and-file members of East Slavic communities, the book often focuses on elites and their efforts to construct and implement ethnonational projects. Thus I am entirely in accord with the approach adopted recently by Simon Franklin and Emma Widdis in their interpretation of Russian identities as texts written by “producers of culture.” They write:

It is these culturally inscribed Russias that are our focus here. It would of course be nice to know what proportion of the wider population might have heard of or associated themselves with which aspects of which type of identity at which time. By and large, however, we try to steer clear of the trap of taking the populace for granted when attributing an identity to it, and such speculations are beyond our scope.⁹

When it comes to “identity texts” produced by elites, it is worth noting that political and religious institutions, with which those elites were closely associated, generally tend to sustain identities that justify their existence and present their view of the world. There is also a tension between central and local institutions. Thus it is hardly surprising that in the fifteenth century chroniclers sponsored by the Muscovite metropolitans promoted the unity of the Rus’ lands under Moscow, while chroniclers working under the auspices of the Lithuanian princes emphasized the unity of the Lithuanian land and Lithuanian Rus’. It would certainly be wrong to treat ethnonational identities in isolation from political, religious, and other types of loyalties constructed and sustained by early modern societies. This book focuses mainly on ethnic and national identities, but other types of identity, such as religious, political, and social, are discussed as well, usually in connection with the formation of the former. The study of their interaction suggests that up to the late eighteenth century ethnonational identities were secondary to other types of identity and loyalty, such as those based on family, clan, social group, region, dynasty, and religion. This does not mean, however, that ethnonational identity did not exist before that period or did not contribute significantly to the formation of collective and individual self-consciousness in premodern societies.

Given the focus of this book on builders and producers of identity, the main analytical category that I employ in my research is the identity-building project. In my discussion of East Slavic identities, I show how they were constructed by means of diverse efforts that created reservoirs of collective memory, images, and symbols. The first such undertaking examined in the book is the Rus’ project of the Kyivan period, which served as the basis for most of the later competing projects developed by the East Slavic elites. These included the Muscovite project, matched on the opposite side of the Mongol boundary by the Ruthenian project of the Ukrainian and Belarusian elites. In eastern Europe, the second half of the seventeenth century saw the beginnings of the first modern national project, that of Russian imperial identity, with blurred

⁹ Simon Franklin and Emma Widdis, “All the Russias . . .?” in *National Identity in Russian Culture: An Introduction*, ed. edem (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 1–8, here 3.

boundaries between its imperial and national components. I argue that it was fully formed in the first decades of the century, during the era of the Petrine reforms. The construction of Ukrainian Cossack identity, which laid the foundations for the Ukrainian national project of the modern era, was completed at about the same time. The Ruthenian identity that developed in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania prepared the ground for the nineteenth-century Belarusian national project. By the end of the eighteenth century, literary works written in languages very close to modern Russian and Ukrainian had emerged from the cocoon of bookish Church Slavonic.

The questions posed in this book are largely informed by historiographic tradition. Every chapter begins with a discussion of different viewpoints concerning a given problem, while in the conclusions I return to the historiographic problems posed at the beginning. Since the book is addressed to an English-speaking Western audience, the historiographic sections pay special attention to the presentation and critique of approaches developed by Russian and Soviet historians, which still frame Western interpretations of the subject to a significant degree. Although I often discuss in great detail the pluses and minuses of each historiographic approach, my purpose is not to pick winners and losers in historiographic debate but to go beyond the national paradigms that have largely shaped historical discussions over the last two centuries in order to present a fresh view of the subject. The only way to assess the validity of historiographic tradition is to check its main assumptions and conclusions against the evidence of the sources, which take center stage in my investigation. The reader should therefore be prepared to encounter many excerpts from a great diversity of historical sources. Selecting sources in a narrative that covers almost a millennium is a challenging task in itself, and different approaches are required to deal with twelfth-century chronicles and eighteenth-century bureaucratic correspondence. Still, I believe that direct access to the voices of the past helps the reader make sense of complex historiographic concepts from which s/he is separated by layers of cultural insulation.

Owing to the scarcity of modern research directly related to my topic, each chapter of the book deals with a limited number of identity-related issues that have some basis in the historiographic tradition. In discussing these issues, I try to reconstruct the main stages of development of East Slavic identities on the basis of the available data. Provocative questions posed in this book, such as the one on who has the better claim to the Kyivan Rus' heritage, may strike specialists in the field as overly simple and anachronistic. Nevertheless, they are highly relevant to ongoing public debate about the premodern history of the Eastern Slavs and often

helpful in tackling a number of “historiographically correct” questions with which specialists are concerned. My approach to the subject is twofold. First, I seek to deconstruct the existing “nation-based” narrative of East Slavic history. Long before I began to write this book, that narrative was questioned in specific studies on individual periods of East Slavic history. For example, debates on the Old Rus’ nationality of Kyivan times undermined the concept of one Rus’ nation, while research on early modern Belarus and Ukraine questioned the existence of separate Ukrainian and Belarusian identities in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Yet there has been no systematic effort to reevaluate the entire historical paradigm. My other major goal, and a risky one at that, is to suggest a new outline of the development of East Slavic identities and thus prepare the ground for a reconceptualization of the premodern history of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. I hope that both attempts will stimulate new research on the history of East Slavic identities and lead eventually to a new synthesis of the history of the Eastern Slavs.

Finally, a few words about the structure of the book, whose focus on the development of premodern identity-building projects has led me to depart from the conventions of traditional Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian national histories. Chapter 1, which considers the origins of Rus’, is followed by a discussion of the changing meanings of the term “Rus’ Land” during the appanage period (chapter 2). A Great Russian narrative would continue by focusing on Muscovy, but chapter 3 of this work is devoted to Rus’ identities in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: judging by available sources, the concept of the Rus’ Land was adopted in the Rus’ territories under Lithuanian control much earlier than in the lands under Mongol suzerainty. A work on Ukrainian or Belarusian history would go on to discuss Ruthenian identity, but that topic is deferred here to chapter 5, while the intervening chapter 4 is concerned with the development of Muscovite identity, forged between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. Knowledge of that process is indispensable to understanding the transformation of Lithuanian Rus’ loyalties into the Ruthenian identity of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The multiple lines of my narrative meet in chapter 6 (“Was there a reunification?”) and then divide into separate but related streams: chapter 7 discusses the construction of imperial Russian identity, while chapter 8 deals with the metamorphoses of Ruthenian identity in the Muscovite state (including the Hetmanate) and the Commonwealth in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The conclusions summarize the results of my research and discuss their bearing on present-day concerns.

1 The origins of Rus'

The history of Kyivan (Kievan) Rus', the medieval East Slavic state that existed between the tenth and thirteenth centuries and extended from the Baltic in the north to the Black Sea in the south, and from the Carpathian Mountains in the west to the Volga River in the east, has remained at the center of Russia's search for identity ever since the emergence of historical studies as a scholarly discipline in the Russian Empire. In fact, the first historiographic debate in the empire, which took place in the 1740s and pitted one of the founders of historical studies in Russia, G. F. Müller, against Russia's preeminent scientist and linguist, Mikhail Lomonosov, focused on Kyivan Rus' history. At the core of that debate, which subsequently became known as the "Varangian Controversy," was the question of whether the first Kyivan princes and the state they created were Germanic (Varangian) or "Russian" (East Slavic). The debate has now been going on for more than two centuries, gaining new impetus in the years of World War II and the Cold War, and turning on the definition of Russian identity and that of other Eastern Slavs vis-à-vis the West.¹

With the rise of the Ukrainian movement in the Russian Empire in the 1840s, the history of Kyivan Rus' turned into a battleground between followers and opponents of the Slavist Mikhail Pogodin. According to Pogodin's theory, Kyiv and its environs were originally settled by Great Russian tribes that migrated north after the Mongol invasion of the mid-thirteenth century. Only after this migration, claimed Pogodin, did the "Little Russians" or Ukrainians settle the area. At stake was the question of Russian and Ukrainian historical identity and which of the two East Slavic nations had the better claim to the legacy of the Kyivan Rus' princes. The twentieth century added a new twist to the debate,

¹ On the origins of the Varangian controversy and the uses of history in the eighteenth-century Russian Empire, see Hans Rogger, *National Consciousness in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), pp. 186–52, and Vera Tolz, *Russia* (London and New York, 2001), pp. 50–53. For the history of the debate, see I. P. Shaskol'skii, *Normanskaia teoriia v sovremennoi burzhuaznoi nauke* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1965), and A. A. Khlevov, *Normanskaia problema v otechestvennoi istoricheskoi nauke* (St. Petersburg, 1997).

dividing scholars who argued that Kyivan Rus' was the common homeland of the Eastern Slavs and the cradle of the "Old Rus'" nationality from those who claimed the Kyivan past on behalf of the Russian or Ukrainian nation.²

Was Kyivan Rus' the product of the activities of the Vikings/Norsemen/Varangians, or was it a state not only populated mainly by Eastern Slavs but also created and ruled by them? And if the latter was the case, then who had the better claim to Kyivan Rus' – the Russians or the Ukrainians and Belarusians (separately or together)? The first question has lost its political urgency because of the outcome of post-communist nation-building in eastern Europe, but it has not disappeared altogether. Since the dissolution of the USSR and the demise of the notoriously anti-Normanist Soviet historiography, historians in that part of the world are no longer obliged to oppose the Normanist thesis on ideological grounds. Nevertheless, after Russia's brief flirtation with the West in the early 1990s, the West resumed its traditional role of "other" in Russian national consciousness, thereby reviving the anti-Normanist trend in Russian historiography and popular literature.³ The dissolution of the USSR has well and truly revived the East Slavic contest for the legacy of Kyivan Rus'. The view that the Ukrainians were the true heirs to the Rus' legacy, which was confined to Ukrainian émigré publications in the West before 1991, has gained a new lease on life in independent Ukraine on both the academic and the popular levels. In Ukrainian public discourse, Kyivan Rus' emerged as the first Ukrainian state, the images of Rus' princes appeared on Ukrainian bank notes, and the symbol of the Kyivan princes, the trident, was adopted as the coat of arms of independent Ukraine. Cathedrals and monasteries dating back to the times of Kyivan Rus' and destroyed by the Bolshevik regime were restored by the Kyiv city authorities, as was the monument to the first Christian princess, Olha (Olga), in downtown Kyiv. These aggressive efforts on the part of the Ukrainian public to reclaim the legacy of the Kyivan Rus' past encouraged Belarusian intellectuals to renew their search for the origins of their nation in the same historical period and turn their attention to

² For the origins of the debate, see Jaroslaw Pelenski, "The Ukrainian-Russian Debate over the Legacy of Kievan Rus'," in idem, *The Contest for the Legacy of Kievan Rus'* (Boulder, Colo., 1998), pp. 213–27; Olga Andriewsky, "The Russian-Ukrainian Discourse and the Failure of the 'Little Russian Solution,' 1782–1917," in *Culture, Nation, and Identity: The Ukrainian-Russian Encounter (1600–1945)*, ed. Andreas Kappeler, Zenon E. Kohut, Frank E. Sysyn, and Mark von Hagen (Edmonton and Toronto, 2003), pp. 182–214.

³ For a recent example of the latter, see a volume of almost eight hundred pages by the extremely prolific Russian writer and amateur historian A. L. Nikitin, *Osnovaniia russkoi istorii* (Moscow, 2001).

the Principality of Polatsk, an autonomous realm in the empire of the Kyivan princes.⁴

Exploring the ethnocultural identities of Kyivan Rus' remains an important task for anyone who seeks to place the age-old debates on the national character of Kyivan Rus' into broader historical perspective and test their main assumptions against what we now know about the medieval history of Rus'. The present chapter approaches this question by examining the identity project that was endorsed by the elites of Kyivan Rus' and found expression in the Rus' chronicles and other surviving literary works of the period. It asks questions about the primary loyalty of those elites (to their tribe, city, principality, state, and dynasty) and goes on to explore the ethnic, political, religious, cultural, and other levels of Rus' identity. It also tries to distinguish the loyalties of those who inhabited the center of the Kyivan realm from those of dwellers on the periphery. Such a differentiation seems particularly important for any attempt to reconstruct the identity of the Kyivan Rus' elites in all its complexity and attain a fuller understanding of the ethnocultural and political roots of the nations known today under the common name of Eastern Slavs.

What was Kyivan Rus'?

An answer to this simple question, as to most questions about medieval East Slavic history, is not readily available, and the one we can provide is quite complex and incomplete. The term itself comes from imperial Russian historiography and was created to distinguish one historical period within the imperial Russian narrative from another (that is, Kyivan from Muscovite). It helped underline existing differences between these two periods of "all-Russian" history and as such was gladly accepted in Ukrainian historiography, whose twentieth-century representatives fought hard to remove the history of Kyivan Rus' from the imperial historical narrative. Currently, "Kyivan Rus'" is used mainly to define the state

⁴ On debates about Kyivan Rus' in post-1991 Ukraine, see Andrew Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation* (New Haven and London, 2000), pp. 1–20. For the interpretation of the history of Polatsk and the Polatsk principality in Soviet and post-1991 Belarusian historiography, see G. V. Shtykhov, *Drevnii Polotsk, IX–XIII vv.* (Minsk, 1975); idem, *Goroda Polotskoi zemli (IX–XIII vv.)* (Minsk, 1978); idem, "U istokov belorusskoi narodnosti," *Ruthenica* (Kyiv) 1 (2002): 85–88; Uladzimir Arloŭ, *Taiamnitsy polatskai historyi* (Minsk, 1994). For a discussion of the genesis of the Belarusian nation and an account of the Polatsk principality as the first Belarusian state in post-Soviet Belarusian historiography, see Rainer Lindner, *Historyki i ūlada. Natsyiatvorchly pratsės i histarychnaia palityka ū Belarusi XIX–XX st.* (Minsk, 2003), pp. 445–53 (Lindner's book was originally published in German under the title *Historiker und Herrschaft: Nationsbildung und Geschichtspolitik in Weißrussland im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* [Munich, 1999]).

established in the tenth century by princes of the Rurikid dynasty that disintegrated into a number of polities after the Mongol invasion of the mid-thirteenth century. As the first known Kyivan princes and members of their retinues had non-Slavic or, more precisely, Scandinavian names – Rorik (Rurik), from whom the Rurikid dynasty took its name, Helgi (Oleh/Oleg), Ingvar (Ihor/Igor), Helga (Olha/Olga), and so on – there is good reason to believe that the polity known today as Kyivan Rus' was one of the many “nation-building” enterprises undertaken by the Norsemen in medieval Europe.

In all likelihood, the Scandinavian rulers appeared in Kyiv sometime in the late ninth or early tenth century and very soon found themselves at the head of a growing empire. Kyiv reached the height of its power in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, when it was ruled by three of its most famous princes, Sviatoslav the Brave, St. Volodymyr (Vladimir) the Great, and Yaroslav the Wise. Prince Sviatoslav ruled between 945 and 972 (prior to 957 under the regency of his mother, Olha, who was the first Christian member of the dynasty). He became known for his victories over the neighbors of Rus', including Byzantium, but despite his Slavic name (Sviatoslav was the first in his dynasty to have a non-Scandinavian name), he had little attachment to the Rus' realm, and, judging by the chronicler's account, planned to move his capital to the Danube. His son Volodymyr, who ruled between 980 and 1015, felt much more attached to Kyiv. He considerably extended the boundaries of the realm and cemented it ideologically by introducing Byzantine Christianity as the official religion of the land ca. 988. Volodymyr's son Yaroslav, who ruled (with interruptions) between 1015 and 1054, reunited the realm after a period of fratricidal wars. He supported the development of Christian culture and learning and turned Kyiv into a “Constantinople on the Dnipro [Dnieper]” but also fought a war with Byzantium and distanced his realm from it by installing the first Rus'-born metropolitan in Kyiv.

After the death of Yaroslav in 1054, the freshly built empire gradually began to disintegrate into a number of smaller principalities ruled by members of the Rurikid dynasty. In the second half of the eleventh century, that process had not yet reached its peak and was somewhat delayed by Yaroslav's eldest sons. Early in the twelfth century, Yaroslav's grandson, Prince Volodymyr Monomakh, who ruled Kyiv between 1113 and 1125, managed to restore the unity of the realm and the authority of its Kyivan prince. But his success proved temporary, and soon after Monomakh's death the feuds resumed. The power of Kyiv was eroded by the growing strength of the local princes, who developed into semi-autonomous or fully independent rulers by the end of the century. The

disintegration of the formerly centralized Kyivan state was partly responsible for the ease with which the Mongols conquered Rus' in a number of military campaigns between 1237 and 1240. Most historians regard the Mongol invasion as the single event that formally closed the period of East Slavic history known as the era of Kyivan Rus'.⁵

What we know about Kyivan Rus' today is based primarily on the account of its history presented in the earliest Rus' historical narrative, the Primary Chronicle, which has survived in compilations dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Most students of the chronicle assume that Nestor, a monk of the Kyivan Cave Monastery, composed (or edited) its text ca. 1113. There have been numerous and generally successful attempts to find or reconstruct the sources used by the author of the Primary Chronicle, including Byzantine chronicles and Slavic literary works. The most optimistic assessments suggest that chronicle writing began in Kyiv as early as the tenth century, but that hypothesis runs counter to the most authoritative theory on the subject, developed in the first decades of the twentieth century by Aleksei Shakhmatov. He dated the emergence of chronicle writing in Kyiv to the 1030s, assuming that it was associated with the activities of the Kyiv metropolitanate and the clergy of St. Sophia's Cathedral. From there, chronicle writing evidently moved to the Kyivan Cave Monastery: the first autobiographical entry in the Primary Chronicle, under the year 1051, states that one of its authors was admitted to the monastery at the age of seventeen. It is assumed today that the Primary Chronicle is based on an earlier account comprising Kyivan and Novgorodian narratives (the earliest of them apparently not divided into annual entries) that was compiled in Kyiv in the 1090s. The author of the Primary Chronicle (presumably Nestor) edited the earlier account, supplemented it with annual entries for the last decade of the eleventh century and the first decade of the twelfth, and added an introduction whose opening sentence, "This is the Tale of Bygone Years," supplied the name by which the chronicle is known in modern scholarship. Further additions and revisions were made in the second decade of the twelfth century, first at the Vydubychi Monastery in Kyiv

⁵ For general surveys of the period, see Mykhailo Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus'*, ed. Frank E. Sysyn et al., vol. I, *From Prehistory to the Eleventh Century* (Edmonton and Toronto, 1997); Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus, 750–1200* (London and New York, 1996); J. L. I. Fennell, *The Crisis of Medieval Russia* (London and New York, 1983); Oleksii Tolochko and Petro Tolochko, *Kyiv's'ka Rus'*, vol. IV of *Ukraina kriz' vilyky* (Kyiv, 1998). For the treatment of Kyivan Rus' history in English-language syntheses of Russian and Ukrainian history, see Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 6th edn (New York and Oxford, 2000), pp. 23–62; Janet Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980–1584* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 1–133; Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto, 1988), pp. 19–54; Paul R. Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine* (Toronto, 1996), pp. 51–104.

during the rule of Volodymyr Monomakh and later in Novgorod, where Mstyslav, the son of Monomakh, probably oversaw the editorial process.⁶

This reconstruction of the earliest history of Rus' chronicle writing is largely based on hypothesis, and many questions still remain unanswered. What does seem clear is that the Primary Chronicle was not the work of a single author but of a number of editors and compilers.⁷ It is also apparent that the chronicle was as much a work of literary art as it was a political and cultural statement, for the chroniclers' knowledge of "bygone years" was limited at best. The authors of the Primary Chronicle had ample opportunity to reconstruct events long gone and vanished from the memory of contemporaries, as well as to report on current developments, in a manner that fitted their own agendas and the needs of their sponsors. Those agendas and needs often differed from one chronicler and prince to another. Thus, when a new author took on the compilation of the chronicle, the process of editing, censoring, and correcting its text would begin anew. As a result, when it comes to the structure of its narrative, the Primary Chronicle often reads like a postmodern text. It can easily be compared to a historical archive – a repository of earlier texts of various provenance whose narrative lines often were not reconciled with one another and could even be flatly contradictory. "One should not, however," warns Simon Franklin, "imagine the chronicle as an unedited scrap book, a random assemblage of whatever snippets happened to be available. The compiler had a coherent approach to Providential history, a coherent perspective on native history, and a critical concern for accuracy." According to Franklin, the chronicler successfully adapted the traditions of Byzantine historical writing to his own purposes. He accepted the principles of Byzantine historical chronology and found a place for Rus' in the Byzantine time map. He also incorporated the local historical tradition into a Christian interpretation of history borrowed from Byzantine sources. The contradictions in his narrative lines, obvious to the modern eye, were not regarded as such by the medieval author, for

⁶ For an English translation of the text of the tale in its Laurentian (Suzdal or North-eastern Rus' version), see *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*, ed. and trans. Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge, Mass., 1953). For a discussion of the earliest stages of Kyivan chronicle writing, see A. A. Shakhmatov, *Razyskaniia o drevneishikh russkikh letopisnykh svodakh* (St. Petersburg, 1908); M. D. Priselkov, *Istoriia russkogo letopisaniia XI–XV vv.* (Leningrad, 1940); B. A. Rybakov, *Drevniaia Rus': skazaniia, byliny, letopisi* (Moscow, 1963); A. K. Aleshkovskii, *Povest' vremennykh let* (Moscow, 1971); A. G. Kuž'min, *Nachal'nye etapny drevnerusskogo letopisaniia* (Moscow, 1977); V. K. Ziborov, *O letopisi Nestora. Osnovnoi letopisnyi svod v russkom letopisaniu XI v.* (St. Petersburg, 1995).

⁷ On the ambiguity of the term "author" in relation to medieval texts, see Riccardo Picchio, "Compilation and Composition: Two Levels of Authorship in the Orthodox Slavic Tradition," *Cyrrillomethodianum* 5 (1981): 1–4.

whom the numerous stories of the baptism of Rus' did not derive from free human will but manifested a divine plan for the Land of Rus'.⁸

Most importantly for our discussion, the Primary Chronicle speaks in many voices and reveals multiple identities – a fact that can only be welcomed, given the overall scarcity of sources on the period. The preservation of the chronicle text in a number of versions in regional, non-Kyivan compilations enhances its potential as a source for the study of the development of Rus' identities, not only in the capital but also “on the ground,” in the peripheral principalities of the Rurikid realm.

The elusive nationality

When it comes to the present-day understanding of Russian history, the concept that dominates the interpretation of issues related to the ethnic identity of Kyivan Rus' remains that of one Rus' or Russian nationality.⁹ During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the view of the East Slavic past as the history of one all-Rus' nationality extended to all periods of East Slavic history. The emergence of Ukrainian and Belarusian national historiographies in the twentieth century resulted in the division of the common all-Russian historical account into national Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian narratives. The only exception, as noted in the introduction to the present work, seems to be the history of Kyivan Rus', which in most textbooks of east European history, both in Russia and in the West, continues to be seen not only as the common starting point of the history of the three East Slavic nations but also as the home of one all-Rus' nationality. In the West, this problem is treated quite differently in the specialized literature on Kyivan Rus' and in general surveys of Russian history. For example, in their innovative survey of Rus' before 1200, Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard draw a clear distinction between “Rus” and “Russia”: “The story of the land of the Rus could continue in one direction towards modern Russia, or in other directions towards, eventually, Ukraine or Belarus. The land of the Rus is none of these, or

⁸ See Franklin and Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus*, pp. 317–19. Cf. Simon Franklin, “Borrowed Time: Perceptions of the Past in Twelfth-Century Rus',” in idem, *Byzantium-Rus-Russia: Studies in the Translation of Christian Culture* (Aldershot, Hampshire and Burlington, Vermont, 2002), no. XVI, pp. 157–71. On the nature of Byzantine historicism, see S. S. Averintsev, “Poriadok kosmosa i poriadok istorii v mirovozzrenii rannego srednevekov'ia. (Obshchie zamechaniia),” in *Antichnost' i Vizantiia*, ed. L. A. Freidberg (Moscow, 1975), pp. 266–87.

⁹ For a survey of pertinent historiographic concepts, see Taras Kuzio, “Historiography and National Identity among the Eastern Slavs: Towards a New Framework,” *National Identities* 3, no. 2 (2001): 109–32, here 113–22.

else it is a shared predecessor of all three.”¹⁰ But that is not the approach taken by Nicholas V. Riasanovsky in his *History of Russia*, the most popular Western textbook on the subject. He begins his chapter on the origins of the Kyivan state with the following statement: “The problem of the origin of the first Russian state, that of Kiev, is exceedingly complex and controversial.”¹¹

The origins of the theory of one Rus' nationality as the main agent of Kyivan Rus' history can be traced back to the writings of the father of twentieth-century Russian historiography, Vasilii Kliuchevsky. A number of Russian scholars, including Aleksandr Presniakov, contributed to the development of that concept.¹² Not until Soviet times, however, was it truly launched on its career. It was fully formulated by the Leningrad scholar Vladimir Mavrodin in his work on the formation of the Old Rus' state, published in 1945 in an atmosphere of strong anti-German sentiment and Soviet wartime patriotism. The book treated the East Slavic population of Kyivan Rus' as a unified ethnocultural category, defined as “nationality” (*narodnost'*).¹³ The term “Old Rus' nationality” and the concept denoted by it served, *inter alia*, to establish Russia's claim to the historical legacy of Kyivan Rus' and therefore survived the demise of Soviet historiography. It is quite popular in Russia today, accepted even by such authors as Valentin Sedov, who is prepared go as far back as the middle of the first millennium BC in searching for the origins of the Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians, and who recognizes the Ukrainians (in line with Mykhailo Hrushevsky's argument) as the heirs of the sixth-century Antes.¹⁴ Even in Ukraine, where the authors of general surveys seem to embrace Hrushevsky's interpretation of the ethnic history of Kyivan

¹⁰ Franklin and Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus*, p. xvii. Cf. Simon Franklin, “Russia in Time,” in *National Identity in Russian Culture: An Introduction*, ed. Franklin and Emma Widdis (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 11–29, here 12.

¹¹ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, p. 25.

¹² See V. O. Kliuchevskii, *Sochineniia*, vol. I (Moscow, 1956), pp. 32–34, 42–43, 94–95, 128–29, 147, 152–53, 204–5; A. E. Presniakov, *Lektsii po russkoi istorii*, vol. I, *Kievskaiia Rus'* (Moscow, 1938; repr. The Hague, 1966), pp. 1–11.

¹³ The term *drevnerusskaia narodnost'* (Old Russian nationality), coined by Mavrodin to denote the population of Kyivan Rus', competed with two other terms suggested respectively in 1943 and 1944 by A. D. Udaltsov: *drevnerusskii narod* (Old Russian people) and *obshcherusskaia narodnost'* (all-Russian nationality). Mavrodin's variant combined elements of both formulas, obscuring the genetic link of the concept of Old Rus' nationality with its all-Russian prototype of the turn of the twentieth century. On Mavrodin and his role in creating the concept of Old Rus' nationality, see Nataliia Iusova, “Problema davn'orus'koï narodnosti' v pratsi V. V. Mavrodina ‘Obrazovanie drevnerusskogo gosudarstva’ (1945 r.),” *Ruthenica* (Kyiv) 1 (2002): 152–63.

¹⁴ See Valentin Sedov, “Drevnerusskaia narodnost' i predposylki ee differentsiatsii,” *Ruthenica* 1 (2002): 70–73. Cf. idem, *Slaviane v rannem srednevekov'e* (Moscow, 1995); idem, *Drevnerusskaia narodnost'* (Moscow, 1999).

Rus', the concept appears to be alive and well in the writings of such students of the period as Petro Tolochko.¹⁵

There are nevertheless serious problems with the term and the concept itself. In Russia, for example, Igor Danilevsky recently questioned the role of the state in the formation of the Old Rus' nationality (he uses the term in quotation marks) and expressed doubt whether Kyivan Rus' authors had any "national consciousness" at all. He also criticized the use of the ethnonym "Russians" by some of his colleagues in referring to the East Slavic population of Kyivan Rus'.¹⁶ In Ukraine, Oleksii Tolochko stated that it would be a waste of effort to search Kyivan Rus' history for any "people" unified by biological, linguistic, and cultural factors; he suggested instead that the "Old Rus' nationality" be conceived not as an ethnocultural entity but as an imagined community in the sense defined by Benedict Anderson.¹⁷

When applying the idea of an Old Rus' nationality to the history of the Kyivan realm, its proponents generally avoid discussing the chronological boundaries within which that nationality was formed, while those who do so face the problem of squeezing its formation into an unreasonably short period of time. In most accounts, the "window of opportunity" is slightly more than fifty years in length, extending from the formation of the Kyivan Rus' territory under Volodymyr and Yaroslav, accompanied by the gradual Christianization of the realm (an all-important factor in the argument of proponents of this concept), to the early twelfth century, when the sources provide indisputable evidence of the progressive disintegration of the Rus' state and the identity that could plausibly be associated with its existence. Thus Aleksandr Rogov and Boris Floria, who offer the most consistent discussion of the development of ethnic, cultural, and

¹⁵ Taras Kuzio states that in today's Ukraine "Kyivan Rus' is described as either a proto-Ukrainian state *in toto* or as a common but loose eastern Slavic state until the twelfth century. No current in Ukrainian historiography can accept that Kyivan Rus' was the first Russian state" ("Historiography and National Identity," p. 125). On the existence of one Rus' nationality, see Petro Tolochko's chapter on the ethnic development of Rus' from the ninth to the twelfth century in Tolochko and Tolochko, *Kyivs'ka Rus'*, pp. 287–309. In this particular work, the term used to define the notion of Old Rus' nationality is "Old Rus' ethnocultural communality (*spil'nist'*).” The same term is applied consistently by Petro Tolochko's younger colleague Volodymyr Rychka (see his *Kyivs'ka Rus': problema etnokul'turnoho rozvytku (konfesiynyi aspekt)* [Kyiv, 1994]). Another Ukrainian author, Yurii Pavlenko, uses the term "Old Rus' macro-ethnic entity" with reference to the same concept. See his "Teoretyko-metodolohichni zasady doslidzhennia etnogenezu skhidnoslov'ians'kykh narodiv u tsyvilizatsiinomu konteksti," *Ruthenica* 1 (2002): 9–24, here 22.

¹⁶ See Igor Danilevskii, "Drevnerusskaia gosudarstvennost' i 'narod Rus': vozmozhnosti i puti korrektnogo opisaniia," *Ab Imperio* (Kazan), 2001, no. 3: 147–68.

¹⁷ See Aleksei (Oleksii) Tolochko, "Voozbrazhennaia narodnost'," *Ruthenica* 1 (2002): 112–17, here 115.

political identities in Kyivan Rus', find themselves in difficulty when seeking a chronological space in which to "park" the formation of the Old Rus' nationality. In searching for manifestations of an all-Rus' identity in the writings of the Kyivan era, they indicate a period from the mid-eleventh century to the beginning of the twelfth as the time when the term "Rus' Land" began to be applied to the Rurikid realm as a whole. The problem with that interpretation becomes apparent at the end of the article, when, in their effort to explain the local sympathies and even bias of the author of the Primary Chronicle, Rogov and Floria identify this same period as a time of growing separatist feeling among the Rus' elites – a process allegedly manifested in the revival of old tribal loyalties and reflected in the chronicle.¹⁸

Once scholars proceed from a discussion of factors that may or may not have been involved in the formation of the Old Rus' nationality to an analysis of sources that are supposed to reflect the existence of the all-Russian (East Slavic) identity, they encounter impassable obstacles in their way. If it is possible to find numerous examples of loyalty to what we today would call a Rus' state, there is very little evidence that Kyivan Rus' authors had a well-defined identity setting them apart from the non-Slavic subjects of the Rus' princes. This was one of the conclusions of Nikita Tolstoi, who was among the first to pose the question about the identity of Nestor, the presumed author of the Primary Chronicle. Tolstoi concluded that East Slavic (he called it "Russian") consciousness was a marginal component of the chronicler's identity.¹⁹

Owing to the scarcity of sources, recent discussions of the identity of Kyivan Rus' have focused mainly on the identity of Nestor the Chronicler. The question of whether Nestor the Hagiographer, a monk known from the Patericon of the Kyivan Cave Monastery, was indeed the author of the chronicle or wrote only a number of *Lives* of the monastery's fathers is still open for discussion. Some scholars claim that the very notion of Nestor the Chronicler is a product of the imaginations of fifteenth-century monks at the Cave Monastery. Others continue to defend the traditional view,

¹⁸ The selection and interpretation of sources on the basis of which Rogov and Floria reached their conclusion about the application of the term "Rus' Land" to the whole Rurikid realm seems no less problematic. All of them except the *Sermon (Slovo)* of Metropolitan Ilarion bear clear indications of later (post-twelfth-century) revisions, while Ilarion's *Sermon*, contrary to the statements of Rogov and Floria, does not refer to "all the Rus' Land." See A. I. Rogov and B. N. Floria, "Formirovanie samosoznaniia drevnerusskoi narodnosti (po pamiatnikam drevnerusskoi pis'mennosti X–XII vv.)," in *Razvitie ètnicheskogo samosoznaniia slavianskikh narodov v èpokhu rannego srednevekov'ia* (Moscow, 1982), pp. 96–119, here 109–10; cf. 117.

¹⁹ See N. I. Tolstoi, "Ètnicheskoe samopoznanie i samosoznanie Nestora Letopistsa, avtora 'Povesti vremennykh let,'" in *Issledovaniia po slavianskomu istoricheskomu iazykoznaniiu. Pamiati professora G. A. Khaburgaeva* (Moscow, 1993), pp. 4–12.