

# The Absent Rus' Land and Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi<sup>1</sup>

Charles J. Halperin

*Bloomington, Indiana*

**Abstract:** After the Mongol conquest of the 13th century, the Kyivan myth of the “Rus' Land” played a less important role in the east Slavic lands that came under the control of Poland or Lithuania than in the northeastern territory that came to constitute Muscovy. Galicia, which belonged to Poland, became known administratively as the Rus' Land. The Belarusian-Lithuanian Chronicles revived the concept in the Ruthenian lands incorporated into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In these chronicles, Rus' Land referred to all of Kyivan Rus' historically, but could denote all the Ruthenian territories in the Grand Duchy, or only those in Belarusian regions, or only those in Ukrainian regions in the post-Kyivan period. In addition, the Belarusian-Lithuanian Chronicles borrowed passages from northeastern Rus' chronicles in which the Rus' Land meant northeastern Rus' or Muscovy. In the text of the Union of Lublin, the Rus' Land connoted the four borderland palatinates annexed by Poland after the Union of Lublin. The Rus' Land also occasionally appeared in other sources. However, Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi and the mid-seventeenth century Cossacks did not invoke the term to legitimize their new polity, thus discarding an element of the Kyivan inheritance. In Ukraine, this discontinuity of the Rus' Land myth has not been appreciated and remains unexplained.

**Keywords:** Kyivan inheritance, Rus' Land, Ukraine, Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi.

**W**hile the “contest for the legacy of Kyivan Rus'” has been a subject of considerable historical investigation,<sup>2</sup> one feature of Kyivan-Ukrainian intellectual continuity/discontinuity has not received adequate attention. The myth of the “Rus' Land” played a significant role in the history of Kyivan Rus'. Muscovite ideologues eventually translated the myth to the northeast, where it continued to play a major role until it went out of use at the turn of the seventeenth century. The myth did not disappear in the east Slavic lands that came under the control of Poland and Lithuania, but it played only a minor role there. However, the concept was not mobilized at all in defence of the Cossack Rebellion of Bohdan

---

<sup>1</sup> I thank Frank Sysyn for reading an earlier draft of this article and providing invaluable assistance. I am grateful to two anonymous referees and the Editor of *East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies* for their comments. I am solely responsible for all remaining errors.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Pelenski, but cf. Bushkovitch.

Khmel'nyts'kyi (1648-54). The reasons for this discontinuity remain unexplored and unexplained.

Until now the very existence of a specific Rus' Land myth in early-modern Ukraine has not been fully recognized. The noun "Rus'" has been extensively studied, but the phrase "Rus' Land" has mostly been considered to be synonymous with Rus' (Sysyn, "Seventeenth-Century Views" and "Ukrainian-Polish Relations"). Existing comments on the concept are brief and unsystematic, and lack historical context. It is premature to equate the two terms until we have studied the concept of the "Rus' Land" separately. Consequently, this article will not include recent studies that examine the meaning of "Rus'" in any period of medieval and early-modern east Slavic history. Phrases that do not use Rus' as an adjective (e.g., White Rus') will not be considered. This article does not pretend to be comprehensive; in the hope of inspiring future research on the topic, its purpose is to raise the question of how the Rus' Land myth evolved *stricto sensu* in Ruthenian territory. To provide a historical background for the phrase "Rus' Land" in medieval and early-modern Ruthenia through the Khmel'nyts'kyi period, we begin with the history of the Rus' Land concept in Kyivan Rus', then in northeastern Rus' and Muscovy. The appearance, or non-appearance, of the term Rus' Land in post-Khmel'nyts'kyi sources—*Sinopsis* (*Synopsis*); the so-called Cossack chronicles (*Litopys samovydtzia* [*Eyewitness Chronicle*]) and the works of Hryhorii Hrab''iianka and Samiilo [Samuil] Velychko; and the *History of the Rus'* (*Istoriia Rusov*)—falls beyond the chronological limits of this article, and must also be left to other historians to explore.

#### THE RUS' LAND IN KYIVAN RUS'

During the Kyivan period, from the tenth century to the middle of the thirteenth century, the concept of the Rus' Land played a prominent role in Kyivan Rus' history and culture (Halperin, "The Concept of the Russian Land"). Geographically it first applied to the Dnipro River valley, a triangle marked by three cities: Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Pereiaslav. By the twelfth century it had acquired a broader scope, designating all the east Slavic lands headed by a prince from the Rus' dynastic line descended from Saint Volodymyr (c. 958-1015). The myth never acquired an ethnic or national meaning (Halperin, "The Concept of the *Ruskaia Zemlia*"). Even in its broader territorial sense, the centre of the Rus' Land remained Kyiv, the "capital" of the grand prince. In the second half of the twelfth century, when princes from the northeast, Vladimir and Suzdal', challenged Kyivan hegemony, they could not appropriate the myth of the Rus' Land, so they invented alternatives: the Suzdal' Land, the Vladimir Land, the Rostov Land. After the Mongol conquest, city-states such as Novgorod and Pskov did not

articulate Novgorod Land or Pskov Land ideologies. The phrase “Rus' Land” appeared, but lacked ideological associations. Apparently a “land,” whether it be the Rus' Land or an alternative “land,” had to be headed by a Volodymyrovych, and neither Novgorod nor Pskov qualified.

#### THE RUS' LAND IN MUSCOVY

No later than the middle of the fifteenth century the rising Muscovite grand principality in northeastern Rus' appropriated the myth of the Rus' Land, so much so that a spokesman for its long-time rival, the Grand Principality of Tver', had to devise an alternative concept, opting for “the Tverian Land” in his writings (Halperin, “Tverian Political Thought”). This geographic translation “removed” the Rus' Land from the Dnipro River valley and “relocated” it to the region of the Volga and Oka Rivers. By the sixteenth century, Muscovy's monopoly of the myth of the Rus' Land in the northeast had long become unassailable.

After Ivan IV's coronation as tsar in 1547, the Hellenized forms of “Rus’”—“Ros” and its variant “Rosiiia”—came into more frequent use in Muscovy. The forms “Ros” and “Ros Land” (“*Rossiiskaia zemlia*”) usually carried ecclesiastical or imperial connotations (Halperin, “Rus' versus Ros”). Although that coronation introduced more imperial forms of the Rus' Land concept into Muscovite thought of the “Rus' / Ros Tsardom” (“*Russkoe / rossiiskoe tsarstvo / tsarstvie*”), Muscovite bookmen continued to invoke the Rus' Land through the second half of the sixteenth century. It was only during the Time of Troubles, 1598-1613, that the myth of the Rus' Land was definitively displaced by the concept of the “Muscovite State” (“*moskovskoe gosudarstvo*”). Implicitly, when Muscovy lacked a legitimate princely ruler and was headed by pretenders and foreign aspirants to the Muscovite throne, the state could no longer be perceived as a “land,” especially a Rus' Land. A “state” could function without a legitimate princely ruler, but a “land” could not.

#### THE RUS' LAND IN UKRAINE AND BELARUS

The Rus' Land concept did not completely disappear in Ukraine and Belarus after their acquisition by Poland and Lithuania, respectively. However, tracing its evolution is complicated by several problems. Many sources for the thirteenth through the seventeenth centuries were written in Polish, Latin, or Russian, creating the possibility of linguistic distortion. Furthermore, Polish and, later, Muscovite influence might have introduced

conceptual distortions even in sources written in the Slavonic, Ukrainian, or Belarusian languages, because Poles and Muscovites might have perceived the Rus' Land differently than Ruthenians.

In the thirteenth century, before and after the Mongol conquest, princes in the southwest who ruled Galicia and Volhynia attempted to appropriate the term. Although Galician princes continued to try to occupy the throne of the grand prince of all Rus' in Kyiv, their chroniclers and propagandists used "the Rus' Land," including the Latin term "*terra Russiae*," to denote Galicia alone. When the Galician princely line became extinct, Poland acquired Galicia, which was reconstituted in the fifteenth century as part of the Rus' (Ruthenian) Palatinate and continued to be called the Rus' Land. When kings of Poland claimed that their rule included "the Rus' Land," they meant the Ruthenian Palatinate.

This limited referent to the Rus' Land continued to be used during the seventeenth century, including the Khmel'nyts'kyi period. A 1648 report on Khmel'nyts'kyi by Adam Kysil' referred to the "Rus' governor" of the "Rus' Land" ("*ruskim zem'em*"), but the editor changed the name of the region to Galicia.<sup>3</sup>

In Muscovy the term "Rus' Land" appeared in the title of King Sigismund Augustus of Poland during the reign of Tsar Ivan IV in two of the four 1567 epistles to Sigismund in the names of Muscovite boyars whom he had invited to defect to Poland-Lithuania. Similarities in language strongly suggest that all four epistles were composed from a template, and most historians agree that they were composed by Ivan IV himself, but authorship is secondary here (Keenan 67-68). Prince I. D. Bel'skii offered to partition Poland-Lithuania, allowing Sigismund Augustus to take Poland, while Bel'skii would take the Lithuanian Grand Duchy and the Rus' Land minus whatever lands were claimed by Prince M. I. Vorotynskii. Prince I. F. Mstislavskii suggested the same land apportions to Bel'skii and Sigismund Augustus, with some lands in Lithuania being allotted to himself (he did not proffer any consideration to Vorotynskii) (Likhachev and Lur'e, *Poslaniia* 245, 253). The credibility of the suggested partition is not at issue. Some historians doubt that these replies to Sigismund's missives were ever sent (Skrynnikov 312-14). In a commentary to Bel'skii's epistle, Iakov Lur'e contended that the "Rus' Land" meant the Belarusian and Ukrainian lands under the authority of the King of Poland-Grand Duke of Lithuania (Likhachev and Lur'e, *Poslaniia* 674). This is possible, but it is more likely that the phrase denoted Galicia. The other east Slavic lands were subsumed under the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and were not transferred to the Crown of Poland until two years later by the Union of Lublin in 1569. Regardless,

---

<sup>3</sup> *Vossoedinenie Ukrainy s Rossiei*, 2: 25, 28. Galicia could also be identified as the Galician Land (*terrestris Haliciensis*) (*Vossoedinenie Ukrainy s Rossiei* 2: 68-71).

given Muscovite ideological pretensions to monopolize the myth of the Rus' Land, it was very sloppy for a Muscovite writer to indulge Polish-Lithuanian pretensions to rule territory previously or currently identified as the Rus' Land.

Ukrainian areas other than Galicia, including Volhynia and the original "core" Rus' Land of Kyiv, as well as Belarus, fell under the sovereignty of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Rus' Land concept survived there as well, in chronicles and documentary sources. The Belarusian-Lithuanian Chronicles, also called the Lithuanian Chronicles or the West Rus' Chronicles, are a set of intimately interconnected chronicles, redactions, and manuscripts published from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. The consensus is that the earliest version originated in Smolensk under Bishop Gerasim in the fourteenth century and continued to be written in Belarus, perhaps in the region of Navahrudak (Novogorodok, Novogrudok) (Ulashchik, *Vvedenie* 9-81, 150-67, 237-38; Floria; Kiastutis; Ul'ianovskii, "Ukrainskie letopisi"). Generically, they are labelled *Letopis' velikikh kniaziei litovskikh* (the Chronicle of the Lithuanian Grand Dukes) or *Khronika velikogo kniazhestva Litovskogo i Zhomoitskogo* (the Chronicle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Samogitia) because they were commissioned by members of the Lithuanian royal family or because they reflected the political interests of various Lithuanian aristocratic clans. Therefore, they expressed the Lithuanian point of view, even though they were composed by Orthodox Rus' authors, probably clerics, and written, at least originally, in Cyrillic in a form of Belarusian. It was only later that copies were sometimes transliterated into Latin script or translated into the Polish language. While associating their treatment of the phrase "the Rus' Land" with Belarusians should not arouse any objections, attributing their views to Ukrainians is speculative because no separate Ukrainian chronicles survive from the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries and no Ukrainian sources refer to these chronicles.

*Hustyns'kyi litopys* (the Hustynia Chronicle), a Ukrainian chronicle compiled in the 1620s but copied in the 1670s, provides more direct information on Ukrainian conceptions of the Rus' Land. References to the Rus' Land in the Hustynia Chronicle overlap but also diverge from those in the Belarusian-Lithuanian Chronicles. I will treat the divergences separately.

Because the contents of these chronicles, redactions, and manuscripts coincide so much, I have not identified them individually. The consistency among the chronicles also obviates the need for chronological distinctions. The Belarusian-Lithuanian Chronicles conveyed multiple meanings of the Rus' Land, simultaneously applying the concept to different, sometimes overlapping and sometimes mutually exclusive, regions. However, in these

narrative sources the term is never applied to Galicia because it was part of the Polish Crown, not the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

In his sub-chapter “Rus' v leto- i istoriopisanii VKL XVI-XVII vv.” (“Rus' in the Chronicles and Historical Writings of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania of the 15th to 17th centuries”), O. I. Dziarnovich tries to analyze each chronicle in chronological order and in the process makes some valid comments on the different geographic parameters of the term Rus' Land (175-80). He simplistically reduces the alternatives to a narrow meaning and a broad meaning. His opening paragraph, however, vitiates any distinction between “Rus'” and the “Rus' Land” by identifying the coordinates of “Rus'” based on references to the “entire Rus' Land.” He refers to “Rus' (the Rus' Land)” as if those terms were synonymous. He misinterprets references to the Rus' Land in passages about the battle of Kulikovo (see below) in which the Rus' Land is the Muscovite grand principality. As some passages in the chronicles suggest, but other passages contradict, the concept that the “entire Rus' Land” (always?) constituted an organic part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, his conclusion that Rus' and the Rus' Land refer to the same territory is invalidated. He fails to note that the Kyivan Rus' Land included Galicia, a region that is excluded from the Rus' Land in the Belarusian-Lithuanian Chronicles. Dziarnovich's overall schema of the meaning of the Rus' Land in the Belarusian-Lithuanian Chronicles is unconvincing.

I propose a schema that differs from Dziarnovich's conceptualization of how the Belarusian-Lithuanian Chronicles employ the myth of the Rus' Land. I have identified five geographic definitions of the “Rus' Land” in the Belarusian-Lithuanian Chronicles. Given the volume of material, my citations might not be comprehensive, particularly in later chronicles, redactions, or manuscripts in Polish.

- (1) The Rus' Land is the Kyivan Rus', either in the narrower sense of the Dnipro River valley, or in the broader sense of all East Slavic lands under Volodymyrovych princes.

In the Belarusian-Lithuanian Chronicles, as in the Hustynia Chronicle, the narratives of Kyivan Rus' history were derived from *Ipat'evskaia letopis'* (the Hypatian Chronicle) and/or from mid-fifteenth-century Muscovite compilations; for our purpose the exact filiation of any given passage is secondary (Pritsak, “The Hypatian Chronicle” 57-60). The content of these passages is purely derivative.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei* [hereafter *PSRL*] 17: 1, 3, 5, 7, 11, 21, 25-27, 111, 115, 123, 230, 243-44, 477; *PSRL* 35: 19, 27, 36-37, 40, 79, 118-20, 129, 174, 176; *Bevzo* 133; *The Hustynia Chronicle* 34, 40-41, 61-62, 64, 69, 76, 86, 90, 103, 105,

(2) The Rus' Land comprises all the Ruthenian territories in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Belarus locations dominate this material, so some references here might qualify as allusions only to Belarusian territories. In many cases the text refers to "the entire Rus' Land." Smolensk, Vitsebsk, and Navahrudak from Belarus, and Kyiv and Chernihiv from Ukraine, among many other cities, appear multiple times.<sup>5</sup> One passage stands out: in 1500, Grand Prince Ivan III of Moscow invaded the Rus' Land (*Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei* [hereafter *PSRL*] 17: 342). This is a one sentence embodiment of the contest between Moscow and Vilnius for the legacy of the myth of the Rus' Land. Here, quite clearly the Rus' Land is *not* Muscovy.

(3) The Rus' Land comprises the Belarusian territories of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

The Rus' Land could also, sometimes ambiguously, designate only the Belarusian territories of the Grand Duchy.<sup>6</sup> Again, one passage in *Khronika Bykhovtsa* best attests to this connotation of the Rus' Land (87, 107). Grand Duke Alexander and his wife Elena (incidentally, the daughter of Grand Prince Ivan III of Moscow) travelled to the Rus' Land, staying in Smolensk, Vitsebsk, and Polatsk, before returning to Vilnius. Here, Vilnius is *not* part of the Rus' Land.

(4) The Rus' Land comprises the Ukrainian territories of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

References to exclusively Ukrainian cities as being in the Rus' Land are relatively few, because at this time this region did not play a prominent role in the political life of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. However, Kyiv and Chernihiv make their appearance here.<sup>7</sup> The most intriguing passage recounts that in 1497 the Tatars invaded Volhynia, killing the local

---

108, 113, 115, 130, 138, 141, 143, 145, 152-53, 158-59, 160, 162, 164, 168, 186-87, 217, 223-24, 230, 233, 241, 245, 247, 253-54, 261, 264-66, 268, 270, 277, 278, 283, 287, 296-97.

<sup>5</sup> *PSRL* 17: 68, 93, 102, 108, 135-36, 136-37, 140, 180, 188, 202, 275, 281-82, 285-86, 299, 325, 336, 339, 342, 360, 364-65, 387, 391, 399, 451, 462, 464, 466, 514, 533; *PSRL* 35: 76, 92, 109, 131, 164, 210-11; *PSRL* 32: 19, 20, 155; *Khronika Bykhovtsa* 45, 72; *The Hustynia Chronicle* 308, 329, 332, 344, 356; Kiaupene 102.

<sup>6</sup> *PSRL* 17: 184, 338; *PSRL* 35: 143, 232; *Khronika Bykhovtsa* 87, 107.

<sup>7</sup> *PSRL* 17: 233-34, 248-49, 302, 392, 481, 580; *PSRL* 35: 124, 130, 148; *Khronika Bykhovtsa* 40.

archbishop, something that had never before happened in the Rus' Land (PSRL 35: 124). Ergo, Volhynia is in the Rus' Land. This is intriguing because during 1237-38 the bishop of Vladimir in the northeast, very much part of the Rus' Land as it was then defined, perished when the Tatars took the city. Vasyli' Ul'ianovs'kyi (Vasili' Ul'ianovskii) interprets the "Rus' Land" here to mean the boundaries of the Metropolitanate, by which he means the territory under the jurisdiction of the metropolitan of Kyiv, the Ruthenian territories in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Ul'ianovs'kyi is probably correct that in practice the metropolitan in Kyiv exercised authority only within the boundaries of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, but he should have clarified that the metropolitan in Kyiv bore the title "metropolitan of all Rus'," never "metropolitan of the Rus' Land" ("Ukrainskie letopisi" 233).

(5) The Rus' Land is in the northeast, later Muscovy.

The Belarusian-Lithuanian Chronicles and the Hustynia Chronicle also contain derivative material from the northeastern and later Muscovite chronicles covering events from the Mongol conquest to the end of the fourteenth century. These passages directly contradict any claim that the entire Rus' Land had been incorporated into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and according to the chronicles, the Rus' Land and Muscovy were mutually exclusive. The cities of Suzdal', Nizhnii Novgorod, and Moscow did not belong to Lithuania. In addition to recounting the Mongol census of northeast Rus' in the thirteenth century, these passages regurgitate excerpts from Muscovite depictions of events of Rus'-Tatar relations in the last two decades of the fourteenth century that identified Muscovy as the Rus' Land: the defeat of Emir Mamai by Grand Prince Dmitrii Donskoi in the battle of Kulikovo Field in 1380 (including excerpts from *Skazanie o Mamaevom poboishche* [Narrative of the Battle with Mamai]), the sack of Moscow by Khan Tokhtamysh in 1382, and the invasion of the Rus' Land by Timur (Temer-Aksak, Tamerlane) in 1395. In 1399 Vytautas, Grand Duke of Lithuania, expected his ally Tokhtamysh to assign him the Rus' Land after he had defeated Timur on the Vorskla River. Unfortunately for Vytautas, Timur won the battle. The Rus' Land that Vytautas expected to receive included Tver', Pskov, and Moscow, none of which belonged to the Rus' Land that Vytautas already ruled, even if Tver' and Pskov sometimes fell within the Lithuanian sphere of influence.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> PSRL 17: 27, 37, 41-43, 47, 54, 97, 173, 330-31, 456-57, 517; PSRL 35: 17, 29-31, 45, 50, 52, 54, 73, 139, 161, 188; PSRL 32: 55, 58, 148; *Khronika Bykhovtsa* 74; *The Hustynia Chronicle* 303, 315-16, 327, 330. Regarding Muscovite sources for the Kulikovo era, see Halperin, "The Russian Land and the Russian Tsar."

## HUSTYNIA CHRONICLE

Turning now to the Hustynia Chronicle, in discussing the pre-history of the Slavs the chronicler opines that Sarmatia is now the Rus' Land (*The Hustynia Chronicle* 27). The vagueness of the concept of "Sarmatia" precludes any analysis. In entries beginning after the Mongol conquest, the Hustynia Chronicle somewhat ambiguously refers to Galicia as the Rus' Land, either on its own or in combination with all the Kyivan Rus' Lands. The Tatars returned from their eastern European campaign of 1242 to the Rus' Land; in 1261 the Tatars harmed the Rus' Land; Khan Nogai in 1269 attacked the Rus' Land, in 1343 Casimir III the Great, king of Poland, divided the Rus' Land (*The Hustynia Chronicle* 299, 304, 306, 322).

The Hustynia Chronicle notes that *sub anno* 1469, the Volga Tatars attacked "our Rus' Land," referring at least in part to Podillia; it observes that *sub anno* 1516, Khan Batu attacked "our Rus' Land"<sup>9</sup>; and *sub anno* 1589, the Patriarch of Constantinople Jeremiah visited "our Rus' Land."<sup>10</sup> I wonder if the qualifier "our," which occurs in other passages concerning the Kyivan Rus' period, implicitly acknowledges that there is a Rus' Land other than "ours" (*The Hustynia Chronicle* 90, 287).

Finally, the Hustynia Chronicle notes that *sub anno* 1589, the Union of Brest was imposed on "the Rus' Land" (*The Hustynia Chronicle* 367). If the extent of the Rus' Land corresponds to the jurisdiction of the newly-appointed Rus' metropolitan, then we might infer that the Rus' Land in that year encompassed all the Ruthenian Orthodox territories, which would be historically true of the Union of Brest. Unfortunately, the vagueness of the passage precludes further analysis. However, this passage lends some credence to Ul'ianovs'kyi's interpretation of the 1497 passage (cited above) on the death of the metropolitan in Volhynia, which suggests that the Rus' Land coincides with the boundaries of the Kyivan Metropolitanate.

The ambiguities attached to the concept that the Rus' Land was located in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, as revealed by the Belarusian-Lithuanian Chronicles and the Hustynia Chronicle, also surfaced in the sixteenth century in the texts of the Union of Lublin of 1569 that created the Commonwealth and transferred some east Slavic lands under the sovereignty of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to the Crown of Poland. Galicia was already part of Poland, so its status was not altered. Sigismund Augustus referred to himself in Latin and Polish as the ruler of both the

---

<sup>9</sup> The chronicler Hrabjanka records that in 1248 the Tatars attacked the Rus' Land, an archaic and misdated allusion (306).

<sup>10</sup> *The Hustynia Chronicle* 340, 363. This passage goes on to mention that the Cossacks fought off the Tatars, but it does not categorize the region the Cossacks defended as the Rus' Land.

“Kyivan and Rus’ Lands” (“*terrarum . . . Cuiaviae, Russiae, ziemie . . . kijowskiej, ruskiej*”), but then called Kyiv in Latin the “capital of the Rus’, Podillian and Volhynian Land” (“*Kiioviae, tanquam caput terrarum Russiae, Podoliae et Voliniae*”), which since ancient times had belonged to the Crown of Poland, but in Polish was called “the capital and main city of the Rus’ Land” (“*Kijow byl i jest glowa i glownem miastem ruskiej ziemie, a ruska ziemia wszytka z dawnych czasow od przodkow naszych krolow polskich miedzy inemi przedniejszemi czlonki do Korony Polskiej jest przylaczona*”) (Kutrzeba and Semkowicz 309-10, 312). The title of the Polish King discriminated between the Rus’ (Galician) and Kyivan Lands. Volhynia and Podillia were not listed among his possessions, unless Volhynia and Podillia were subsumed under the “Kyivan Land” (The “Kyivan Land” also occurred in a very late version of the Belarusian-Lithuanian Chronicle<sup>11</sup>). However, if Kyiv was accorded the dignity of capital of the Rus’ Land in Latin, that impugned the distinction between the Rus’ Land and the Kyivan Land by subordinating Galicia, administratively the Rus’ Land, to Kyiv. The Polish version interpolated “and main city” after “capital” but more significantly eliminated the references to the Podillian and Volhynian lands. In the Polish version of the Belarusian-Lithuanian Chronicle, Kyiv is straightforwardly the capital of the Rus’ Land, despite the distinction between the Rus’ and Kyivan lands under the royal title. If Galicia belonged to the Rus’ Land and Kyiv was always capital of the Rus’ Land, then implicitly but anomalously when Kyiv belonged to Lithuania, it was nevertheless the capital of Galicia, which belonged to Poland. Of course, the language used can obfuscate the differences between the pre-Lublin past and the post-Lublin present.

It is difficult to say whose point of view of Kyiv was expressed in the Union of Lublin agreement. The Poles dominated the proceedings and dictated the resulting territorial adjustments; the Ukrainian nobility probably supported the adjustments because they promised greater security from the Tatars and the Ottomans. Whether the Ukrainian elite shared the Polish definition of Kyiv as the capital and main city of the Rus’ Land at the time is not documented.

#### ADDITIONAL SOURCES

Other sources from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries also refer to the Rus’ Land. The Rus’ Land appears as an identifying qualifier to individuals in documents registered in the Lithuanian Metrica, by definition, residents of the Grand Duchy, a boyar “of the Rus’ Land,” a monk

---

<sup>11</sup> PSRL 32: 17; the same sentence refers to the Rus’ “monarchy” (“*monarkhiia*”).

“of the Rus' Land.”<sup>12</sup> A comprehensive search of all published and unpublished volumes of the Lithuanian *Metrica* from the fourteenth century through the middle of the seventeenth century is needed to determine the frequency of such allusions, the geographic locations that were denoted as the Rus' Land, and the context in which the reference arose. In addition, the fifteen volumes of *Akty, odnosiashchiesia k istorii iuzhnoi i zapadnoi Rossii* (*Acts Pertaining to the History of Southern and Western Russia*), published between 1862 and 1892, might also contain documentary references to the Rus' Land.<sup>13</sup> These research desiderata are best left to specialists with the necessary access.

In his 1621-22 defence of Rus' Orthodox Christianity against advocates of the 1596 Union of Brest, *Palinodiia* (*Palinodia*), Zakhariia Kopystens'kyi twice referenced the Rus' Land historically: Saint Volodymyr baptized the Rus' Land, and the Apostle Andrew visited and blessed the Rus' Land. In the same work Kopystens'kyi called the Rus' Land his “fatherland” (“*otchizna*”).<sup>14</sup>

The Jagiellonian kings of Poland (like the Piast rulers before them) and the grand dukes of Lithuania were not descendants of St. Volodymyr. Therefore, from a Rus' perspective they were perhaps not entitled to rule the Rus' Land or any other “land” within the Rus' dynastic system. However, they were legitimate princes and kings. By right of conquest they could succeed the Volodymyrovychi as rulers of the Rus' Land, even if they and their Ruthenian subjects could not agree on which territories constituted the Rus' Land. Before the Grand Duke of Lithuania automatically succeeded to the elective throne of Poland and before the

---

<sup>12</sup> See Ul'ianovskii et al. (a document prepared for a conference in Vilnius, 23-25 Sept. 2019, as part of the continuing project *Vostochnye slaviane v poiskakh nadregional'nykh identichnosti (konets XV-seredina XVIII vv.)* [*The Eastern Slavs in Search of New Supra-Regional Identities (end of the 15th-middle of the 18th centuries)*] under the direction of Andrei Vladimirovich Doronin of the German Historical Institute, Moscow) 15. For another reference see *Lietuvos Metrika Knyga No. 7* 195-97, cited in personal communication (Doronin). I thank Frank Sysyn for providing a copy of the conference document and Andrei Doronin and Vasyl' Ul'ianovs'kyi for consultations.

<sup>13</sup> All documents in that series relevant to the Khmel'nyts'kyi period were incorporated into the documentary collections cited below, so the search need address only pre-Khmel'nyts'kyi documents.

<sup>14</sup> *Lev Krevza's A Defense* 720-21. The translation reads “the Land of Rus',” which I have revised. Other passages in this work that repeat the references to Volodymyr and Andrew replaced “the Rus' Land” with “Rus’”; see *Russkaia istoricheskaia biblioteka* 4: 1055 (citation courtesy of Ul'ianovs'kyi, personal communication, 7 Oct. 2019). In this text Rus' and the Rus' Land appear to be synonymous, but note that references to the Rus' Land are rare and never refer to contemporary events.

Union of Lublin, Lithuanian grand dukes and kings of Poland could simultaneously rule different Rus' Lands because Galicia was the Rus' Land to Poland, whereas variously Belarus and the rest of Ukraine were the Rus' Land to Lithuania. It is also plausible that from the thirteenth century on, in all Ruthenian territory under Polish or Lithuanian rule, the myth of the Rus' Land was separated from its dynastic roots because the indigenous Rus' princely line was extinct.

Mid-seventeenth century Ukrainians could have been familiar with the Rus' Land concept from its continued administrative reference to Galicia, in historical references to Kyivan Rus', in the multiple narrative applications of the Rus' Land concept in the Belarusian-Lithuanian Chronicles, and in occasional documents such as the text regarding the Union of Lublin or contemporary texts of political discourse, such as Kopystens'kyi's *Palinodia*. Such access, however, has not been documented, and the Rus' Land concept has apparently not been appreciated in scholarship. Nor has anyone realized that when Khmel'nyts'kyi and the Ukrainian Cossacks came to power after 1648, their spokesmen and diplomats never invoked the Rus' Land.

#### THE RUS' LAND AND KHMEL'NYTS'KYI

As far as I can discover, documents from Khmel'nyts'kyi never mentioned the Rus' Land, and documents about Khmel'nyts'kyi never attributed a use of the Rus' Land concept to him. These documents attest that the Ukrainian Cossacks were Rus' (a noun), even if "Rus' people" (multiple individuals; in Ukrainian, "*liudy*") could mean inhabitants of Galicia or any non-Cossack Ruthenians,<sup>15</sup> individuals belonging to the Rus' "people" ("*narod*," the collective noun), the "Rus' gentry,"<sup>16</sup> individuals that practised the Rus' faith under the guidance of "Rus' priests" in "Rus' churches,"<sup>17</sup> individuals who performed "Rus' liturgical services" using "Rus' books,"<sup>18</sup> which they learned to read in Rus' schools,<sup>19</sup> or individuals who venerated "Rus'

---

<sup>15</sup> *Vossoedinenie Ukrainy s Rossiei* 1: 117-20, 260-61; 2: 40-42; *Dokumenty Bohdana Khmel'nyts'koho* 628-29.

<sup>16</sup> *Dokumenty Bohdana Khmel'nyts'koho* 181-82.

<sup>17</sup> *Vossoedinenie Ukrainy s Rossiei* 1: 113-14, 117-20, 173-74, 197-99; 2: 432; 3: 24, 256-57, 361; *Dokumenty Bohdana Khmel'nyts'koho* 225-26, 285-87; 292-94, 369-71.

<sup>18</sup> *Dokumenty Bohdana Khmel'nyts'koho* 199-202; *Vossoedinenie Ukrainy s Rossiei* 1: 220, 229.

<sup>19</sup> *Dokumenty Bohdana Khmel'nyts'koho* 105-107; *Dokumenty Bohdana Khmel'nyts'koho* 46-47.

saints"<sup>20</sup> and entered "Rus' monasteries."<sup>21</sup> The documents also identified various countries near and far as "lands."<sup>22</sup> However, Khmel'nyts'kyi and his scribes never brought "Rus'" as an adjective together with the noun "land" as a concept.

No document has expressed Khmel'nyts'kyi's<sup>23</sup> reasons for not trying to take advantage of the myth of the Rus' Land. I can imagine three theories:

(1) Khmel'nyts'kyi could simply have been ignorant of the myth.

However, given his ubiquitous invocations of the noun Rus' and his application of the adjective Rus' to a plethora of other nouns, I find it unlikely that he had never heard of the Rus' Land.

(2) Khmel'nyts'kyi could have been more or less familiar with the myth of the Rus' Land but found it archaic, obsolete, and useless.

Certainly, it was superfluous. Khmel'nyts'kyi's loyalty was to the Cossack Zaporozhian "Host." He did not need to invoke the myth of the Rus' Land. This second theory is more persuasive than the first. On the other hand, unless Khmel'nyts'kyi had some aversion to the myth, we would expect it to surface, however randomly.

The Zaporozhian Host concept was sufficient for Cossack purposes but need not have been exclusive. Cossacks and non-Cossack Ukrainians and Ukrainian clergy honoured the Kyivan inheritance, for example, by comparing Khmel'nyts'kyi to St. Volodymyr.<sup>24</sup> This did not extend to the inclusion of the Kyivan myths of the Rus' Land in their ideological expressions or as part of their identity. Khmel'nyts'kyi, in Serhii Plokhy's words, "did not fully identify himself with the Kyivan political tradition" (*The Cossacks and Religion* 272-73). He made Chyhyryn, not Kyiv, his capital. The kings of Poland still valued the Rus' Land enough to include it

<sup>20</sup> *Dokumenty Bohdana Khmel'nyts'koho* 103-105.

<sup>21</sup> *Dokumenty Bohdana Khmel'nyts'koho* 292-94.

<sup>22</sup> *Vossoedinenie Ukrainy s Rossiei* 2: 432; 3: 361; *Dokumenty Bohdana Khmel'nyts'koho* 225-26, 292-94, 369-71.

<sup>23</sup> I use "Khmel'nyts'kyi" as shorthand not just for Khmel'nyts'kyi personally, but also in general to indicate his officials and publicists, and the authors of all relevant sources from the period of his leadership.

<sup>24</sup> Plokhy, *The Cossacks and Religion* 154-56, 165-66, 228, 267, 270, 272-73, 386-89; *The Origins of the Slavic Nations* 277-81, 194-99, 232, 237-239, 247-48; Ul'ianovskii, "Staraiia, litovskaia, rech'pospolitskaia i moskovskaia Rus'" 133-69; *Dokumenty Bohdana Khmel'nyts'koho* 646.

in their titles. As the Rus' Land concept was not in vogue in Ukraine, it is possible that Khmel'nyts'kyi found it to be totally without merit or utility; although this is certainly possible, I find it odd.

(3) Khmel'nyts'kyi's seemingly consistent reticence toward the myth of the Rus' Land raises the question of how the Rus' Land concept was different from other "Rus' X" formulations (with Rus' as an adjective) that were not similarly absent from Cossack sources.

My third theory is that despite the separation of the Rus' Land from the Volodymyrovych dynasty (which was replaced by Polish and Lithuanian dynastic lines), the Rus' Land concept retained a vestigial resonance of the dynastic privilege associated with the original Rus' dynasty to which a non-prince such as Khmel'nyts'kyi had no claim. Corroboration of my theory might be found in the methods Khmel'nyts'kyi sources used to treat the concept of a Rus' principality. A deposition to Kysil' in Polish by a courier from Khmel'nyts'kyi concerned the "Rus' principality" ("*księstwo Ruskim*"; "*księstwo*" meant "principality" or "duchy") (*Vossoedinenie Ukrainy s Rossiei* 2: 203-204). The abortive 1658 Treaty of Hadiach would have created a Rus' Grand Duchy / Principality headed not by a Grand Duke or a Grand Prince but by a Cossack Hetman.

According to Tat'iana Tairova-Iakovleva, Khmel'nyts'kyi supposedly called himself "Kyivan and Rus' Prince" and in 1658 his successor Ivan Vyhovs'kyi aspired to become "Grand Prince / Duke of Ukraine." Nevertheless, Tairova-Iakovleva opines that Khmel'nyts'kyi rejected the concept of a "Rus' duchy / principality" (*Dokumenty Bohdana Khmel'nyts'koho* 44, qtd. in Tairova-Iakovleva 455).<sup>25</sup> If Khmel'nyts'kyi declined to enhance his legitimacy by claiming an inheritance from or a right to succeed the Rus' grand princes, he might have been reluctant to invoke the major myth of the Kyivan Rus' that was tied to the Volodymyrovych dynasty, the Rus' Land.

Why Khmel'nyts'kyi and the Zaporozhian Cossacks did not refer to the myth of the Rus' Land requires further study. Regardless of how we explain Khmel'nyts'kyi's (in)action, we may conclude that he broke the continuity of the concept of the Rus' Land in Ukraine that dated from Kyivan times.

---

<sup>25</sup> See also *Vossoedinenie Ukrainy s Rossiei* 2: 117.

## Works Cited

- Bevzo, Oleksandr Aref'ievych. *L'vivs'kyi litopys i Ostroz'kyi litopysets'. Dzhereloznavche doslidzhennia*. Akademiia Nauk USSR, 1970.
- Bushkovitch, Paul. Review of *The Contest for the Legacy of Kievan Rus'*, by Jaroslaw Pelenski. *International History Review*, vol. 12, 1999, pp. 987-88.
- Dokumenty Bohdana Khmel'nyts'koho 1648-1657*. Compiled by Ivan Petrovych Kryp'iakevych and Ivan Lukych Butych, Akademiia Nauk USSR, 1961.
- Doronin, Andrei Vladimirovich. Personal communication. 7 Oct. 2019.
- Dziarnovich, Oleg Ivanovich. "Rus' v leto- i istoriopisanii VKL XVI-XVII vv." *Narrativy Rusi kontsa XV-serediny XVIII v.: v poiskakh svoei istorii*, edited by Andrei Vladimirovich Doronin, ROSSPEN, 2018, pp. 174-89.
- Floria, Boris Nikolaevich. "O 'Letopistse Bykhovtsa.'" *Istochniki i istoriografia slavianskogo srednevekov'ia*, Nauka, 1967, pp. 135-44.
- Halperin, Charles J. "The Concept of the *Ruskaia Zemlia* and Medieval National Consciousness from the Tenth to the Fifteenth Centuries." *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 8, 1980, pp. 75-86.
- . "The Concept of the Russian [sic] Land from the Ninth to the Fourteenth Century." *Russian History*, vol. 2, 1975, pp. 29-38.
- . "Novgorod and the 'Novgorodian Land.'" *Cahiers du monde russe*, vol. 40, 1999, pp. 345-64.
- . "The Russian Land and the Russian Tsar: The Emergence of Muscovite Ideology, 1380-1408." *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, vol. 23, 1976, pp. 7-103.
- . "Rus' versus Ros in Ivan IV's Muscovy." *Slavia*, vol. 86, 2017, pp. 367-75.
- . "Tverian Political Thought in the Fifteenth Century." *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, vol. 18, 1977, pp. 267-73.
- Hrabjanka, Hryhorij. *The Great War of Bohdan Xmel'nyc'kyi*. Introduction by Yuri Lutsenko, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1990. Harvard Library of Early Ukrainian Literature IX.
- The Hustynia Chronicle*. Compiled and with introduction by Oleksiy Tolochko, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2013.
- Keenan, Edward L. *The Kurbskii-Groznyi Apocrypha: The Seventeenth-Century Genesis of the "Correspondence" Attributed to Prince A. M. Kurbskii and Tsar Ivan IV*. With an Appendix by Daniel C. Waugh, Harvard UP, 1971.
- Kiastutis, Gudmantas. "Ob osobennostiakh raboty letopistsev s istochnikami (na materiale litovskikh letopisei XVI)." *Narrativy Rusi kontsa XV-serediny XVIII v.: v poiskakh svoei istorii*, edited by Andrei Vladimirovich Doronin, ROSSPEN, 2018, pp. 142-73.
- Kiaupene, Iuate. "Problema samoidentifikatsii rusinov v kontekste zarozhdeniia rannemodernoï natsiogeneticheskoi mifologii Velikogo kniazhestva Litovskogo." *Drevniaia Rus' posle Drevnei Rusi: diskurs vostochnoslavianskogo (ne)edinstva*, edited by Andrei Vladimirovich Doronin, ROSSPEN, 2017.
- Khronika Bykhovtsa*. Nauka, 1966.

- Lev Krevza's A Defense of Church Unity and Zaxarija Kopystens'kyj's Palinodia. Part I: Texts*, translated and with a foreword by Bohdan Strumiński, edited by Roman Koropec'kyj et al., Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1995. Harvard Library of Early Ukrainian Literature. English Translations III.
- Kutrzeba, Stanisław, and Władysław Semkowicz, editors. *Akta unji Polski z Litwą, 1385-1791*. Gebethner & Wolff, 1932.
- Lietuvos Metrika Knyga No. 7: (1506-1539). Užrašymų knyga 7*. Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2011.
- Likhachev, Dmitrii Sergeevich, and Iakov Solomonovich Lur'e, editors. *Poslaniia Ivana Groznogo*. Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1951.
- Pelenski, Jarosław. *The Contest for the Legacy of Kievan Rus'*. East European Monographs, 1998.
- Plokh'y, Serhii. *The Cossacks and Religion in Early Modern Ukraine*. Oxford UP, 2001.
- . *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus*. Cambridge UP, 2006.
- Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei [PSRL]*. Vol. 32: *Khroniki: Litovskaia i zhmoitskaia, i Bykhovtsa, Letopisi: Barkulabovskaia, Averi i Pantsyrnogo*, Nauka, 1975.
- . Vol. 35: *Letopisi Belorussko-litovskie*. Nauka, 1980.
- . Vol. 17: *Zapadnorusskie letopisi. Iazyki slavianskikh kul'tur*, 2008.
- Pritsak, Omeljan. "The Hypatian Chronicle and Its Role in the Restoration of Ukrainian Historical Consciousness." *Chomu katedry ukrainoznavstva v Harvardi?*, Ukrainian Studies Chair Fund, 1973, pp. 54-60.
- Russkaia istoricheskaia biblioteka*. Vol. 4: *Pamiatniki polemicheskoi literatury v Zapadnoi Rusi*, Arkheograficheskaiia komissiiia, 1878.
- Skrynnikov, Ruslan. *Reign of Terror*. Translated by Paul Williams, The Bronze Horseman Literary Agency, 2015.
- Sysyn, Frank E. "Seventeenth-Century Views on the Causes of the Khmel'nyts'ki Uprising: An Examination of the 'Discourse on the Present Cossack or Peasant War.'" *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 5, 1981, pp. 452-56.
- . "Ukrainian-Polish Relations in the Seventeenth Century: The Role of National Consciousness and National Conflict in the Khmelnytsky Movement." *Poland and Ukraine: Past and Present*, edited by Peter J. Potichnyi, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1980, pp. 72-73.
- Tairova-Iakovleva, Tat'iana. "Otechestvo' v predstavleniakh ukrainskoi starshiny kontsa XVII-nachala XVIII vekov." *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, vols. 33-34, 2008, pp. 453-58.
- Ulashchik, Nikolai Nikolaevich. *Vvedenie v izuchenie belorussko-litovskogo letopisaniia*. Nauka, 1985.
- Ul'ianovskii, Vasilii Irinarkhovich (Vasyl' Irynarkhovych Ul'ianovs'kyi). Personal communication. 7 Oct. 2019.
- . "Staraia, litovskaia, rech'pospolitskaia i moskovskaia Rus' v predstavleniakh dvukh kniazei Konstantinov Ostrozhskikh i tvortsov ostrozhskoi knizhnosti." *Drevniaia Rus' posle Drevnei Rusi: diskurs vostochnoslavianskogo (ne)jedinstva*, edited by Andrei Vladimirovich Doronin, ROSSPEN, 2017, pp. 133-69.

- . "Ukrainskie letopisi nachala XVI-pervoi poloviny XVII vv.: nadregional'noe v regional'nykh narrativakh." *Narrativy Rusi kontsa XV-serediny XVIII v.: v poiskakh svoei istorii*, edited by Andrei Vladimirovich Doronin, ROSSPEN, 2018, pp. 229-60.
- Ul'ianovskii, Vasiliu Irinarkhovich, et al. "K istokam ukrainskoi natsii." "Vostochnye slaviane v poiskakh nadregional'nykh identichnostei v kontse XV-serediny XVIII v. v kontekste zarozhdeniia modernykh natsii v Evrope" Conference, 23-25 Sept. 2019, Vilnius.
- Vossoedinenie Ukrainy s Rossiei. Dokumenty i materialy v trekh tomakh*. Vol. I: 1620-1647 gody, Vol. II: 1648-1651 gody; Vol. III: 1651-1654 gody. Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1954.