INTRODUCTION

MICHAEL CHERNIAVSKY WROTE that references to the Rus' Land were too fragmentary to constitute a myth. The phrase never even acquired a permanent epithet such as "illumined" (*svetlaia*), which was attached to it only intermittently. A myth required greater rationalization and utilization. "One might say that there was…a myth of the ruler, but not of the land, of the country and people as a whole. If anything the myth of the ruler was created at the expense of the myth of the 'land.'"[1] I would contend that the Rus' Land did refer to a country and a people, but the country was defined as the territory ruled by a Volodimerovich prince and the people were defined as the residents of that territory. Therefore, the Rus' Land served overwhelmingly to elevate the status of the ruler,[2] not the country or the people, but it was still a myth, a myth of the Rus'/Volodimerovichi princely dynasty. To be a "land" a political entity had to have a Rus' dynastic line. Moreover, the Rus' Land did undergo rationalization and rather frequent utilization. Russian nationalist historiography erred in projecting adherence to the myth beyond the elite to the "people," for which we have no evidence, and in mistaking the myth of the Rus' Land for a Romantic nationalist reality, as if in all periods the Rus' Land meant "Russia."[3] This book treats the "Rus' Land" as a technical term, an historical and political myth that united the elite around the ruler. Connecting a ruler to the myth of the Rus' Land legitimized him.

Because the evolution of the myth of the Rus' Land can best be understood within the context of the system of "land" names of countries, this study will pay considerable attention to alternative "land" terminology. Some of these phrases rose to the level of concepts, even myths, but others did not. Why they did not tells us something about the nature of the "land"-name system and manifests the unique elevated status of the Rus' Land. Consequently, in order to clarify the meaning of the myth of the Rus' Land, I will devote much space to sources which did not refer to the Rus' Land. Genre of source, geographic location, and political conjunction all influenced who could or could not invoke the Rus' Land.

Chapter 1 analyzes the origins of the "land"-nomenclature system and the changing meanings of the myth from the tenth to the fifteenth centuries. The myth probably arose

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1 Michael Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 104–5, esp. 105n15.

2 There is only one case where the myth of the Rus' Land was utilized to criticize a ruler, in thirteenth-century Galicia. See below. Otherwise Cherniavsky was correct that the Rus' Land (unlike Holy Rus') did not serve as the intellectual foundation for opposition to the ruler.

3 See for example Iu. G. Alekseev, "Istoricheskaia kontseptsiia russkoi zemli i politicheskaia doktrina tsentralizovannogo gosudarstva," in *Genezis i razvitie feodalizma v Rossii: problemy ideologii i kul'tury: mezhvuzovskii sbornik k 80-letiiu V. V. Mavrodina* (Leningrad: LGU, 1987), 140–54, who refers to the uninterrupted continuity of the Rus' Land from Kievan times through the reign of Muscovite Grand Prince Ivan III.

in pre-Christian Rus' and retained a pagan meaning after the adoption of Christianity as the state religion in the late tenth century. Geographically it underwent three phases, from denoting the Dnieper (Dnipro) River valley to applying to all the East Slavic lands under Rus' princes and then exclusively to the northeast.

Chapter 2, for the same period, rejects any notion that the Rus' Land reflected national consciousness, not a priori from the absence of anything remotely resembling a Rus' "nation" at the time, but from its malleable non-ethnic usage.

Chapter 3 examines an alternative "land" myth, the "Tverian Land," expressed in a mid-fifteenth-century Tverian source, which had to be utilized because by this time the Muscovite principality has essentially usurped the myth of the Rus' Land as its exclusive property.

Chapter 4 describes occurrences of the phrase the Novgorodian Land and explains its failure to rise to the level of myth by the absence of a Novgorodian Rus' princely line. After Novgorod's annexation by Muscovy even sources of Novgorodian provenance and local patriotism propagated the myth of the Rus' Land.

Chapter 5 examines the Suzdalian Land, a phrase that could have or should have risen to the level of myth because there were resident Volodimirovich princes but did not, probably because of the overlap of the grand principality of Vladimir with the Suzdalian Land and competing terms such as the Rostovian Land and Vladimirian Land. The Suzdalian Land disappeared in contemporary usage when Muscovy imposed its identity as the Rus' Land on the grand principality of Vladimir.

Chapter 6 analyzes the non-myth Pskovian Land, whose evolution matched that of the Novgorodian Land because of the lack of a native Volodimerovich dynasty in Pskov during the period of Pskov's independence as well as after Muscovy's acquisition of Pskov, when, again, the Rus' Land myth intruded into local sources.

Chapter 7 addresses how the creation of a Muscovite tsardom with Ivan IV's coronation as tsar in 1547 affected usage of the term, which could and perhaps should have been replaced by the Rus' Tsardom. Nevertheless, the myth of the Rus' Land survived and even flourished. However, even though Muscovy now encompassed virtually all "ethnic" Russian territories, the myth of the Rus' Land still did not acquire a national meaning. The inhabitants of the Rus' Land were Russian not because they were ethnically Russian but because they lived in regions ruled by the ruler of the Rus' Land. During the Time of Troubles at the turn of the seventeenth century Muscovy temporarily lost its princely line, and the myth of the Rus' Land went out of usage, never to be restored by the non-Volodimerovich Romanovs.

Chapter 8 analyzes an overlooked phrase that for obvious reasons might have been expected to play a more prominent role in Muscovite thought, the Muscovite Land. Of course, the "land" name system generated the phrase, but it never acquired any conceptual or mythic relevance in large part because Muscovy's domination of the myth of the Rus' Land made it superfluous.

Chapter 9 turns to what became the Ukraine and Belarus from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. In the thirteenth century chronicles from Galicia and Volhynia called Galicia–Volhynia the Rus' Land. They also employed the myth of the Rus' Land to criticize Grand Prince Daniil for surrendering to the Mongols, a unique anti-

princely instance in medieval and early modern East-Slavic history. Poland annexed Galicia after the extinction of its princely line, but the principality retained its identity as the Rus' Land as a province of the Crown of Poland. Curiously during Ivan IV's reign, despite Muscovy's self-proclaimed monopolization of the myth of the Rus' Land, Ivan IV in correspondence with the king of Poland acknowledged the latter's rule over the Rus' Land, meaning Galicia. In Belarus the term Rus' Land survived in a variety of sometimes contradictory geographic definitions, but Bohdan Khmelnytsky's Cossack state did not invoke the Rus' Land, perhaps in part because it had no Rus' princely line.

Therefore, by the second half of the seventeenth century, neither Muscovy nor Ukraine claimed to be the Rus' Land. The myth possessed only historical meaning until it was rediscovered and anachronistically turned into an expression of patriotic Russian nationalist sentiment by Imperial Russian historiography.