Chapter 3

THE TVERIAN LAND

THE *POKHVAL'NOE SLOVO* (word of praise) to Grand Prince Boris Aleksandrovich of Tver' attributed to the monk Foma has, since its discovery and publication in 1908,[1] attracted the attention of specialists both in Old Rus' literature and in medieval Rus' political thought. Despite some disagreements over its composition,[2] dating,[3] and authorship,[4] the consensus of scholarly opinion interprets the text as a reflection of Tverian political pretensions in the middle of the fifteenth century during the reign of Boris Aleksandrovich. This Tverian grand prince, who was alive at the time of Foma's writing, exercised unexpected influence in northeastern Rus' because a prolonged dynastic war in Muscovy weakened Vasilii II's power.

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1 *Inoka Fomy Slovo pokhval'noe o blagovernom velikom kniaze Borise Aleksandroviche*, ed. N. P Likhachev (St. Petersburg: Aleksandrov, 1908). Likhachev's "Introduction" is on pages i–xl, the text 1–55. Hereafter "*Slovo*" refers to the text, and "Likhachev" in the notes to his "Introduction."

2 A. A. Shakhmatov, *Otzyv ob izdanii N. P. Likhacheva, Inoka Fomy Slovo pokhval'noe o blagovernom velikom kniaze Borise Aleksandroviche* (St. Petersburg: Aleksandrov, 1909), 6–11 maintained despite Likhachev that the *Slovo* was really six separate lauds (*slova*); Ia. S. Lur'e, "Rol' Tveri v sozdanii russkogo natsional'nogo gosudarstva," *Uchenye zapiski LGU* 36, seriia istoricheskikh nauk, no. 3 (1939): 85–109 at 88, countered that even if the sections were written at different times, the entire work was compiled at one time, hence the *Slovo* was one work. Also see V. A. Kuchkin, *Povest' o Mikhaile Tverskom* (Moscow: Nauka, 1974), 267–68.

3 Likhachev, liv: 1453 before news of the fall of Constantinople or the death of Dmitrii Shemiaka could reach Tver'; except for Shakhmatov, *Otzyv*, 11–13, that separate *slova* were written between 1446 and 1453, Likhachev's dating is usually accepted: e g., Dmitrij Čiževskij, *History of Russian Literature from the Eleventh Century to the End of the Baroque* (Den Haag: Mouton, 1962), 187 and M. A. Il'in, "Tverskaia literatura XV veka kak istoricheskii istochnik," *Trudy istoriko-arkhivnogo instituta* (Moscow) 3 (1947): 18–68 at 18.

4 There are no grounds for identifying the monk Foma with the Tverian envoy to Florence, the boyar Foma, since the monk refers to the boyar in the third person and indicates that he used the latter's written account and oral report of the council in writing the *Slovo*; moreover, no monk would retain his lay name after being shorn. See Likhachev, lv; Shakhmatov, *Otzyv*, 14; Il'in, "Tverskaia literatura," 20–21. Werner Philipp, "Ein Anonymus von Tverer Publizistik im 15 Jahrhundert," in *Festschrift für Dmytro Čiževskij zum 60 Geburtstag*, ed. Max Vasmer, Veroffentlichungen der Slavisches Seminar an der Freie Universität Berlin 6 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1954), 3–33, makes a serious case that the manuscript attribution of authorship to the monk Foma might be faulty. Wladimir Vodoff, "Le *Slovo pokhval'noe o velikom kniaze Borise Aleksandroviche*: est-il une source historique?" in *Essays in Honor of A.A. Zimin*, ed. Daniel Clarke Waugh (Columbus, OH: Slavica, 1985), 379–403 at 379n1 refers to the author as Pseudo-Foma (Pseudo-Thomas) because the attribution of the text is late. Solely for convenience I refer to the author as Foma without the qualification of quotation marks or use of "Pseudo-Foma" as a euphemism.

The *Slovo* includes a description of the participation—really, as we shall see, only the reception—of the envoy of Boris Aleksandrovich, the boyar Foma,[5] at the Council of Ferrara–Florence. At this council the Byzantine Church agreed to an ecclesiastical union with the papacy in a vain attempt to secure military assistance which might have enabled Constantinople to resist the Ottoman onslaught. Foma attributes a variety of Byzantine imperial titles and epithets in a number of different combinations to Boris; these include *tsar'* (= basileus), *samoderzhets* (autocrat = avtokrator), and *gosudar'* (sovereign). Foma declares Boris to be worthy of an imperial crown (21, 28) as well as equalling or exceeding in his glory and piety such Byzantine emperors as Constantine the Great and Justinian. From these passages scholars have invariably concluded that Tver' aspired to be the new heir of the Byzantine Empire in much the same way as Moscow later did with the doctrine of Moscow-the Third Rome. Ostensibly the apostasy of the Greeks at the Council of Florence compromised them in the eyes of the religiously rigorous and politically ambitious Tverians.[6] The evidence does suggest that Foma's *Slovo* may have been a source of the epistles of the Pskov monk Filofei, who articulated the Third Rome theory.

This interpretation of the Byzantine content of the *Slovo* seems excessive. Passing remarks on the timidity of this Tverian account of the Council of Florence compared to the Muscovite versions[7] or on the lesser degree of success of Tver' in taking advantage of the situation than Moscow[8] only begin to suggest why. The contrast between the Tverian and Muscovite attitudes toward the Byzantines is much stronger than that. Foma never accuses the Greeks of apostasy. He describes only the correspondence preceding the council between Emperor John Paleologus and Boris,[9] and the lavish reception of the boyar Foma by the Byzantine Emperor, the Patriarch, the Pope, and numer-

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5 Vodoff, "Le *Slovo pokhval'noe*," 390n61 proposes that the boyar Foma represented all Rus' princes, not just Boris Aleksandrovich.

6 Likhachev, lx; N. K. Gudzii, *Istoriia drevnei russkoi literatury*, 7th ed. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1966), 308; Philipp, "Ein Anonymus," 4–7; *Istoriia russkoi literatury* (by Shambinago), 10 vols. in 13 (Moscow: Nauka, 1941–54), 2/1:249; Il'in, "Tverskaia literatura," 29; Lur'e, "Rol' Tveri," 91–93 (*pace* Lur'e, that there was really some formal coronation of Boris Aleksandrovich as emperor seems unwarranted); 109; Čiževskij, *History*, 188 agrees but adds that Boris was also considered the equal of the khans (*tsari*). Foma (37) narrates the visit of an envoy of the son of Timur (Temir-Aksak in the Rus' sources, or Tamerlane) from far-off Herat to Tver', to which Boris's fame had spread, bringing rich gifts. Timur's son Shavruk is called one of the *nevernye tsari* (literally: tsars of the unbelievers), as distinguished from the *vernye tsari* (believing tsars, Orthodox Christian tsars, i.e., Byzantine). Foma does not label Shavruk a Tatar, but the explicitness of the religious differences among tsars is atypical of the middle of the fifteenth century. See Halperin, "The Russian Land and The Russian Tsar," 48–52. The historicity of the diplomatic relations between Tver' and Herat does not strain credulity, as the voyage of the Tverian merchant Afanasii Nikitin to India indicates Rus' familiarity with that part of the world.

7 Likhachev, lv.

8 Il'in, "Tverskaia literatura," 21, 19, on the contradictions in the attitude of Boris toward the Council as conveyed by Foma.

9 Vodoff, "Le *Slovo pokhval'noe*," legitimately denies that this letter can be accepted as authentic, which I should have explicitly noted in my original article. I did not intend to imply its authenticity.

ous metropolitans. Each praises the Tverian Grand Prince highly. The theological discussions, the putative coercion of the truly Orthodox clerics to sign the agreement of church union, the apostasy of the Greeks: of all this, recorded in detail in the Muscovite accounts, there is not a word in the *Slovo*. How, after all, could the flattering rhetoric of the reception appeal to Tverian sensibilities were it pronounced by heretic Latins and apostate Greeks? Foma's treatment of the Council of Florence seems designed to obscure its ecclesiastical denouement in order to enhance its ceremonial. The envoy Foma left Florence without signing the agreement of church union, which Tver' did not recognize,[10] but the monk Foma's *Slovo* passes over these facts in silence.

On the other hand, the *Slovo* seems to be consistent with Muscovite reluctance to confront the alleged apostasy of the Greeks until well after the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453, after Foma had written the *Slovo*, in fact until the schism in the Kievan metropolitanate between rival Uniate and anti-Uniate metropolitans in 1461.[11] If this is the case, then the use of Byzantine imperial vocabulary in the *Slovo* should be understood in a different context than has previously been proposed, one that does not challenge Byzantine legitimacy directly, The ascription of Byzantine titulature to Boris would merely further illustrate the typically medieval Rus' ambivalent need to usurp and compulsion to acknowledge Byzantine imperial theory, to invoke Cherniavsky's succinct and penetrating formulation of this complex relationship.[12] Alternatively, it might also constitute an application of a more "domesticated" imperial theory, the doctrine of the monk Akindin of Tver' of the early fourteenth century, that the grand prince is tsar in his own land. This precept is, of course, identical to the western medieval theory that *Rex est imperator in regno suo* (The king is emperor in his own realm). Akindin might have influenced Foma directly, or indirectly through one of Foma's frequently mentioned sources, the so-called *vita* of Dmitrii Donskoi.[13] Without denying the seriousness of the imperial ideology of the *Slovo*—Boris Aleksandrovich is called tsar seven times, autocrat ten[14]—nevertheless the text belongs more to the pre-Florentine period of medieval Rus' utilization of Byzantine imperial ideology than to the post-Florentine.

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10 Vodoff, "Le *Slovo pokhval'noe*," 20–21.

11 Cf. Ihor Ševčenko, "Intellectual Repercussions of the Council of Florence," *Church History* 24, no. 4 (December 1955): 306–9 and Gustave Alef, "Muscovy and the Council of Florence," *Slavic Review* 20, no. 3 (October 1961): 389–401. Neither mentions Foma's *Slovo*.

12 Michael Cherniavsky, "Khan or Basileus: An Aspect of Russian Medieval Political Theory," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20, no. 4 (December 1959): 459–76.

13 Philipp, "Ein Anonymus," 6; Il'in, "Tverskaia literatura," 30; Gudzii, *Istoriia*, 308; *Istoriia russkoi literatury*, 242, 249, even for those who regard the Donskoi *vita* as dating from the 1440s. Unfortunately, these passing remarks do not constitute a full textological analysis of the proposed connection between the two works. On both Akindin and the *vita* of Donskoi see Halperin, "The Russian Land and the Russian Tsar," 69–78.

14 Lur'e, "Rol' Tveri," 89. I should qualify my sweeping statement (Halperin, "The Russian Land and the Russian Tsar," 72) on the uniqueness of the Donskoi *vita* as an affirmation of pre-Florentine Imperial literature in light of the *Slovo*, which I had not taken sufficiently into account. Foma's work survived only in a defective manuscript from the second half of the sixteenth century, in the hands of Old Believers. One usually sees Muscovite "censorship" in the text's unlucky fate (Gudzii, *Istoriia*, 310).

The modesty of Tverian Byzantine aspirations in the *Slovo* is of a piece with the level of ambition in Rus' politics that it exhibits. Scholars have also interpreted the *Slovo* as an expression of Tverian aspirations to political preeminence, if not domination, in northeastern Rus', to "national" "all-Russian" (*obshchrusskii*) prestige as the centre for the unification of the single "Rus' Land."[15] The evidence of the text on this point bears close scrutiny.[16]

The very first page of the *Slovo* announces that Grand Prince Boris Aleksandrovich brought joy to the Tverian Land (*Tferskaia zemlia*), that he was given by God to the Tverian Land to strengthen it, that all lands praise the sovereign and defender of the Tverian Land, Boris (1). The entire Tverian Land (*vsia Tverskaia zemlia*) rejoices in having such a God-given ruler (2).

A letter from the Byzantine Emperor addresses Grand Prince Boris Aleksandrovich as ruler of the whole Tverian realm (*vsea derzhavy Tferskoi*) (4).[17] However, in greeting the envoy Foma at Florence John Paleologus now speaks of Boris as given by God to the Rus' Land (*russkaia zemlia*) (6). The patriarch declares that the fame of Boris Aleksandrovich flows from the Greek Land to the Rus' Land (6), and various metropolitans declare that there is no grand prince in Rus' comparable to Boris (6, 7 twice) whose piety and mercy receive praise in the Rus' Land as they do in Constantinople and in the monasteries on the Holy Mountain (Mt. Athos) (8).

Foma laments that the whole world is not a part of "this land promised by God" (10). The Rus' grand princes hear of and envy the imperial rule of Boris in "this land promised by God" (*v Bogom obetovannom toi zemli tsarstvuiushcha*; *ta zemlia* = this land) (11).

Boris merits lauding above all other Rus' grand princes for his church-building activities (12); no one else is like him in Rus' (13) (a much-repeated phrase in the text); he rules the "entire Tverian realm" (15). In a paraphrase of the famous words of Metropolitan Ilarion of Kiev, Constantinople praises Constantine, Kiev praises Saint Vladimir, and the Tverian Land praises Aleksandr (Mikhailovich), while Boris has exceeded all three in his virtues (15–16).[18]

Obviously, Muscovites and Muscovite texts were more fortunate, politically and ideologically; the Muscovites conquered Tver' in 1485 and the Donskoi *vita* entered into the chronicle tradition. Vodoff, "Le *Slovo pokhval'noe*," 394 qualifies my usage of the concept of "pre-Florentine" imperial literature. The title of Vodoff's article asks whether the *Slovo pokhval'noe* was an "historical source" (in his article he also uses the phrase "historical text"), by which Vodoff meant a reliable, accurate source, one that can be taken literally. I did not take the source "literally" (Vodoff notes that I impugned its mention of a coronation: Vodoff, "Le *Slovo pokhval'noe*," 394n82) but I believe that "inaccurate" ideological texts are valuable "historical sources" on the mentality and culture of their authors and audiences.

15 Especially Lur'e, "Rol' Tveri," 89, 101, and its reflections, such as in Il'in, "Tverskaia literatura," 3, 28, and Gudzii, *Istoriia*, 308.

16 I will give page references in line in parentheses.

17 The word "land" (*zemlia*) was interpolated on the flap of the page, which is both ungrammatical and superfluous. Likhachev, iv n2. Because such phrasing with "land" does not appear in surviving diplomatic documents, Vodoff, "Le *Slovo pokhval'noe*," 389 concludes that the text of the letter in the *Slovo pokhval'noe* was not authentic diplomatic correspondence.

18 Vodoff, "Le *Slovo pokhval'noe*," 393, especially 393n72, rightly criticizes my (and other scholars') omission of mention that Shakhmatov first accused Foma of plagiarizing this passage from Ilarion.

Boris responds with effective military measures to defend the Tverian regime (*Tferskaia vlast'*) against the intrusion of the boyar Kolychev, who came "from the boundaries of Moscow" (*ot predel moskovskikh*) (16). Boris refers to the "Grand Principality of Tver'" (*velikoe kniazhenie Tferskoe*) as the throne of his father (24). He defends the Tverian Land against King Casimir of Poland, returning afterward to his patrimony, the Tverian Grand Principality (36). In an attempt to woo his support in the Muscovite civil war,[19] Prince Dmitrii Shemiaka accuses Vasilii II (Shemiaka's uncle and rival in the Muscovite dynastic wars) of having betrayed both his (Shemiaka's) patrimony and that of Boris, the Tverian Grand Principality, to the Tatars (41), but despite this accusation Boris sends word of his support to the blinded and imprisoned Vasilii II. This information reaches the "Muscovite Land" (*moskovskaia zemlia*) (42). With the strong and implicitly crucial help of Boris, Vasilii II is restored to the Grand Principality of Vladimir (*velikoe kniazhenie Vladimirskoe*) (52).

On the defective final page of the *Slovo*, Foma yet again acclaims Boris as the builder of the Tverian Land, whose scepter (*skipetr'*) he wields (55).

Iakov Lur'e suggests that "this land promised by God," "this land," of which Boris is tsar, is the Rus' Land, because Tver' is not mentioned in several passages which precede these two intriguing phrases. However, neither is the Rus' Land mentioned in the run-up to these assertions, unless one goes pretty far back. It would be easy to conclude that the antecedent of the relative pronoun is so ambiguous as to be unidentifiable. Clearly the numerous references to grand princes in Rus', of whom Boris is the most pious and powerful, are directed against the Grand Princes of Moscow,[20] although the latter too are carefully accorded their grand-princely titles. Yet one wonders how significant it is that the sentences linking Boris Aleksandrovich and the Rus' Land are concentrated in one compact section of the *Slovo* and all are put into the mouths of the Greeks. Despite Lur'e, specific invocations of the Rus' Land in the *Slovo* are rare and dwarfed two-to-one by appeals to the Tverian Land (approximately seven to three). Foma seems to use the phrase the Rus' Land only as a synonym for Rus', which is not always the case. There is no implication that Boris is the only grand prince in Rus'; obviously quite the contrary, he is only the *primus intra pares* among the Rus' grand princes. Therefore, the Rus' Land does not mean the area which Boris rules at all, but all of northeastern Rus'. The patrimony of Boris Aleksandrovich is the Tverian Grand Principality, and logically the Tverian Land, not the Rus' Land. What Boris rules is, without question, the Tverian Land, and the entire text lends credence to the inescapable conclusion that it is the Tverian Land which is the "land promised by God".[21] What does this deceptively simple conclusion entail?

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19 Foma presents an idealized account of Boris Aleksandrovich's somewhat duplicitous role in the Muscovite civil wars; see L. V. Cherepnin, *Russkie feodal'nye arkhivy XIV–XV vv.*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Nauka, 1948–1951), 1:322, 326–27, and Lur'e, "Rol' Tver," 98–102, despite Il'in, 'Tverskaia literatura," 27.

20 First noted by Likhachev, xvi.

21 Several scholars seem to make this point, but without carrying it to its necessary and logical conclusion: Philipp, "Ein Anonymus," 37; Čiževskij, *History*, 188.

Briefly put, Foma did not really seek to identify Tver' with the Rus' Land. Given the fact that the myth of the Rus' Land derived from Kievan Rus', was the most potent and legitimizing political concept for a polity in medieval Rus', the only possible explanation for Foma's reticence is his realization that by the middle of the fifteenth century, if not well earlier, the concept of the Rus' Land had been coopted by Moscow.[22] Both the *vita* of Dmitrii Donskoi, whether antecedent or near-contemporaneous to the *Slovo*, and the Muscovite tales of the Council of Florence, from about a decade later, identify Muscovy as the Rus' Land which is the patrimony of the Muscovite dynastic house. Not even the Muscovite civil war could weaken Muscovy's ideological hold on the myth of the Rus' Land and not even Foma's genuinely ambitious attempt to exalt the Grand Prince of Tver' could impinge on that monopoly. The most Foma could achieve was to question, vaguely, whether Moscow and the Rus' Land were one, as Muscovite texts invariably imply, or whether Tver' and Moscow were both parts of the Rus' Land. Such restrained political intentions better resonate with the cautious application of the Byzantine imperial model to Tver' in the *Slovo* than seeing the text as a precursor of Filofei's Third Rome theory. The Muscovite versions of the events at the Council of Florence define the Rus' Land as the territory ruled by Grand Prince Vasilii II.[23]

Curiously, Foma uses one expression for Muscovy which should have aroused scholarly interest. Foma calls Muscovy the "Muscovite Land." No Muscovite ideological work of or about the events of Muscovy history during the century before Foma wrote ever utilizes this concept. In the *Slovo,* referring to the Muscovite Grand Principality as the Muscovite Land obviously enabled Foma to avoid calling it the Rus' Land, which would not have been to his liking. Yet he uses the term only once, and an even vaguer circumlocution, the "Muscovite boundaries," also only once.

Foma's revision of the passage from Ilarion used in the *vita* of Dmitrii Donskoi, like the passage in the *vita* of Donskoi, breaks syntactic consistency. Constantinople and Kiev are cities, but the Tverian Land praises Boris. Like in the *vita* of Donskoi but unlike in Ilarion, Foma has Kiev praise St. Vladimir, but unlike in both texts, Foma did not invoke the Rus' Land at all. No one praises a Muscovite prince here, but even so Foma could not muster the pretense that the Rus' Land praised a Tverian grand prince.

The itinerary of the envoy Foma (5) includes an impressively artificial but compulsively consistent list of "lands' (*zemli*), culminating in the "Florentine Land," so however Foma utilized "land" terminology cannot be explained by ignorance.

The usage of the term the Rus' Land in connection with Tverian rulers in the so-called "Preface" to the Tverian Chronicle (*Predislovie letopistsa: Kniazhenie Tferskago blagovernykh velikikh kniazei tferskikh*), is not compatible with the pattern of Foma's *Slovo*.[24] Although the "Preface" is also associated by scholars with the reign of Boris

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22 See chapter 1. Similarly, Foma never utilizes the title "grand prince of all Rus'" (*velikii kniaz' vsea Rusi*), which belonged to the grand princes of Vladimir, i.e., the Muscovites. Foma would not have wanted to ascribe this title to Vasilii II, and could not apply it to Boris, so he avoids it, which has never been noted in studies of the *Slovo*.

23 Cherniavsky, "The Reception of the Council of Florence," 347–59.

24 See Lur'e, "Rol' Tveri," 94–97, despite Shakhmatov, *Otzyv*, 14–16. Text: *Rogozhskii letopisets,*

Aleksandrovich and sometimes assigned to the authorship of the monk Foma, these assertions must refer to an older redaction, because the surviving version covers the period from 1327 to 1499. Under 1327 (col. 465), the "Preface" describes Prince Aleksandr Mikhailovich as autocrat and ruler of the Rus' Land, like his father was; under 1363 (col. 469), on the other hand, it ascribes to Mikhail Aleksandrovich rule over the "Tver' regions" (*oblasti Tverskie*) but then alludes to the Tverian Land. Finally, s.a. 1462 calls Vasilii II on his death autocrat of the Rus' Land. I suspect careless adulteration of the original readings of those passages that link Tver' princes with the Rus' Land. After Muscovy incorporated Tver', such confusion in terminology would not be unexpected.

Tverian political thought and its attempt to create a myth of the Tverian Land cannot be dismissed as "provincial" or "separatist" because Muscovy had taken out a copyright on the myth of the Rus' Land. Indeed, Foma got farther pursuing an alternative to the Rus' Land, namely the Tverian Land, than did authors in either Novgorod or Pskov.

Tverskii sbornik in *PSRL*, 15 (Moscow: Nauka, 1965), cols. 463–504. Column numbers will be cited in parentheses in the text.