

Chapter 5

THE SUZDALIAN LAND

IF NEITHER NOVGOROD nor, as we shall see, Pskov could develop its own “land” ideological concept, the Novgorodian Land or the Pskovian Land, because each lacked its own dynastic line, Tver’, which had its own princely line, did not get very far developing a concept of the Tverian Land. The history of the Suzdalian Land has its own complexities. The capital of the Suzdalian Land was not Suzdal’ but the city of Vladimir. The phrase the Vladimirian Land existed but was very rare and insignificant. The princes of Vladimir and Suzdal’ did not get much mileage out of the concept of the Suzdalian Land even in the twelfth century. As the expanded meaning of the Rus’ Land to encompass all Volodimerovich-ruled lands receded in the wake of the Mongol conquest, the term Suzdalian Land came into greater, but not ideological, use, as mentioned in Chapter One. It referred only to the northeast region of the confluence of the Volga and Oka Rivers. Confusion over its capital and territorial extent inhibited clear articulation of the phrase even geographically.¹ In the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, as noted in the preceding chapter, Novgorod used the phrase very flexibly to denote the sphere of rule of the grand princes of Vladimir with whom it contracted treaties, thus avoiding awarding those princes the legitimacy of association with the Rus’ Land. Moscow finally succeeded in imposing its self-definition as the Rus’ Land only in the Muscovite version of its 1470 treaty with Novgorod. The ambiguities and anomalies of the development of the Suzdalian Land in chronicles and saints’ lives are inextricably entwined with the literary history and image of Grand Prince Aleksandr Nevskii, a problem further complicated by its recently contested dating.

The *Laurentian Chronicle*, which terminates in 1305, notes in its obituary of Grand Prince Vsevolod “Big Nest” in 1212 that he ruled the Suzdalian Land for thirty-seven years. There was joy in the Suzdalian Land in 1217 when Iurii Vsevolodovich was born there. In 1237 the Tatars did much evil to the Suzdalian Land and made war upon the Suzdalian Land. In 1250 Metropolitan Kirill travelled from Kiev to the Suzdalian Land, and in 1251 he went from the Suzdalian Land to Novgorod. There was great joy in the city of Vladimir and the “entire Suzdalian Land” in 1252 upon Nevskii’s safe return from the Tatars. In 1257 Tatar census-takers “counted” the “entire Suzdalian, Riazanian, and Muromian Lands.” In 1300 because of the Tatars Metropolitan Maksim moved to the Suzdalian Land from Kiev via Briansk.²

¹ Therefore, I do not find convincing Plokhy’s conclusions that the Suzdalian Land served as the “immediate forerunner of the notion of the Rus’ Land in the political discourse of Northeastern Rus’” and that the Rus’ Land “was later appropriated by Northeastern Rus’ to designate” the Suzdalian Land (Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations*, 75, 158). The Suzdalian Land never rose to a level of ideological significance in which it could anticipate or be replaced by the Rus’ Land.

² “Lavrent’evskaia letopis’,” in *Lavrent’evskaia letopis’: Suzdal’skaia letopis’*, ed. A. I. Tsepkov, *Russkie letopisi 12* (Riazan’: Aleksandriia, 2001), 415, 418, 439, 441, 449, 451, 461.

In these references overwhelmingly the Suzdalian Land appears to be a politically-neutral geographic phrase. Its capital was the city of Vladimir, an anomaly that neither medieval Rus' authors nor modern historians have ever addressed. The Suzdalian Land does not include Riazan', Murom, Novgorod, Kiev, or Briansk. Two passages speaking of joy in the Suzdalian Land do not endorse its complete reification or personification by declaring that the "Suzdalian Land rejoiced." The quantity of references to the Suzdalian Land in the *Laurentian Chronicle* strikes me as modest, but that may be a function of the chronicle's incomplete preservation. For example, key years in Nevskii's life, including his death, are missing from the extant manuscript.

The *Hypatian Chronicle* records the joy in the Suzdalian Land at the birth of Iurii Vsevolodovich. Batu attacked the Suzdalian Land in 1237. Two of Batu's generals besieging Kiev in 1240 had previously "taken" (conquered) the Bulgarian Land (Grand Bolgar on the Volga River) and the Suzdalian Land.³ The narrative of Batu's capture of Kiev originated in the *Hypatian Chronicle* but its new reference to the Suzdalian Land later found its way into the northeastern Rus' chronicle tradition.

Iurii Begunov dated the First Redaction of Nevskii's "Life" to the 1280s. He argued that it was composed in the Rozhdestvenskii Monastery in the city of Vladimir. According to his reconstruction of the First Redaction, at Nevskii's funeral Metropolitan Kirill declared that "the sun has set in the Suzdalian Land." When Nevskii's brother Andrei aroused Batu's ire, Batu sent Nevruï to attack the Suzdalian Land.⁴ In the text of what V. I. Mansikka called the Second Redaction of the "Life," Nevskii returned to the Suzdalian Land after fighting the Chud' (Estonians), his father Iaroslav restored the Suzdalian Land after Nevruï's devastation, and the sun set in the Suzdalian Land on Nevskii's death.⁵ In Begunov's schema the text's Second Redaction first appeared in the *Sofia First Chronicle*. Here the sun sets in the Rus' Land.⁶

Frithjof Schenk and Mari Isoaho follow Begunov in interpreting the Suzdalian Land as an expression of provincial identity and patriotism,⁷ but it looks more like a simple geographic term. According to the *Laurentian Chronicle* in 1249 Nevskii received a Mongol charter for the throne of "Kiev and the entire Rus' Land" while his brother Andrei was assigned the Suzdalian Land.⁸ The "entire Rus' Land" would seem at that time to denote only the Dnieper River valley, thus excluding the Suzdalian Land. By staging the

3 *Ipat'evskaia Letopis'*, ed. A. I. Tsepkov, *Russkie letopisi* 11 (Riazan': Aleksandriia, 2001), 444, 519, 522.

4 Begunov, *Pamiatnik russkoi literatury XIII v.*, 192, 194.

5 V. I. Mansikka, *Zhitie Aleksandra Nevskogo. Razbor redaktsii i teksty* (St. Petersburg, 1913), Appendix, 12, 13, 14.

6 *Sofiiskaia pervaiia letopis'* in *PSRL*, 5, (St. Petersburg: Prats, 1851), 191.

7 Begunov, *Pamiatnik russkoi literatury XIII v.*, 97; F. B. Schenk, *Aleksandr Nevskii v russkoi kul'turnoi pamiati: sviatoi, pravitel', natsional'nyi geroi, 1263–2000* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2007), 65, an authorized translation by Elena Zemskovaia and Maiia Lavrinovich of Schenk, *Aleksandr Nevskij Heiliger–Fürst–Nationalheld: Eine Erinnerungsfigur im russischen kulturellen Gedachtnis (1263–2000)* (Cologne: Bohlau, 2004); Isoaho, *The Image of Aleksandr Nevskiy*, 122.

8 *PSRL*, 1, col. 472.

setting sun in the Suzdalian Land the author of the First Redaction of Nevskii's "Life" was merely being geographically correct.

Ostrowski dates the original, secular military tale of Nevskii, authored by a layman, to the late thirteenth century. This text, according to Ostrowski's reconstruction, mentioned neither the Suzdalian Land nor the Rus' Land. A century later a cleric inserted sufficient hagiographic motifs into the military tale to transform it into a chronicle tale. This was still not a redaction of the "Life" of Nevskii. It too mentioned neither the Suzdalian Land nor the Rus' Land. The earliest redaction of the "Life" arose in the middle of the fifteenth century, no earlier than after the composition of the *Novgorod First Chronicle*, Older Recension, which was among its sources. The author of the First Redaction made further interpolations, including an allusion to St. Vladimir's conversion of the Rus' Land and two references to the Suzdalian Land, including the setting sun.⁹ Not very long after that the compiler of the *Sofia First Chronicle* changed "Suzdalian Land" to "Rus' Land."¹⁰

The thirteen stand-alone manuscripts of Nevskii's "Life" utilized by Begunov, save one, date to after the compilation of the *Sofia First Chronicle* but still read "Suzdalian Land," not the Rus' Land, in the setting-sun passage. The only possible exception is the *Laurentian Chronicle* from the late fourteenth century because this section of the manuscript did not survive. As far as I can tell no scholar has explained how the change in the conception of Nevskii's "homeland" (literally "home land") embodied in the *Sofia First Chronicle* did not intrude into the manuscript tradition of the autonomous "Life."¹¹ Not even the elevation of Nevskii to the status of a "countrywide" (usually phrased as "national") saint in 1547, to be precise a saint in all territory subject to the Russian Orthodox Church,¹² impaired the traditional textual tradition of the "Life."

9 Donald Ostrowski, "Redating the *Life of Alexander Nevskii*," in *Rude and Barbarous Kingdom Revisited: Essays in Russian History in Honor of Robert O. Crummey*, ed. Chester Dunning, Russell E. Martin, and Daniel Rowland (Bloomington: Slavica, 2008), 23–39.

10 Begunov, *Pamiatnik russkoi literatury XIII v.*, 59n128 infers that a sentence found in Mansikka's Second (see Mansikka, *Zhitie Aleksandra Nevskogo*, Appendix, 14) and Third Redactions that there would never be another prince like Nevskii in the Suzdalian Land probably originated in the First Redaction but was deleted because it might be taken as a negative judgment of Nevskii's descendants, the Muscovite princes. However Muscovite princes rapidly assimilated themselves to the myth of the Rus' Land, which would have obviated any comparison to Nevskii's status in the Suzdalian Land. Schenk, *Aleksandr Nevskii*, 65 and Mari Isoaho, *The Image of Aleksandr Nevskiy*, 119, 124, accept Begunov's inclusion of this sentence in the Primary Redaction of the "Life"; Donald Ostrowski, "Dressing a Wolf in Sheep's Clothing: Toward Understanding the Composition of the *Life of Alexander Nevskii*," *Russian History* 40, no. 1 (January 2013): 41–37 at 49n29 contests Begunov's textual justification for this inclusion.

11 The conservatism of the manuscripts of the "Life" on this passage makes it necessary to qualify the assertion of Shenk, *Aleksandr Nevskii*, 94 that the *Sofia First Chronicle* revision of the "Life" influenced all future redactions and Shenk, *Aleksandr Nevskii*, 181n38 that in the "Life" Kirill speaks of the Suzdalian Land but in redactions from the Muscovite period the Rus' Land. New redactions of the "Life" in larger narrative works that post-date the *Sofia First Chronicle* did perpetuate Nevskii's association with the Rus' Land (except for the *Pskov Second Chronicle*, for which see further below), but separate manuscripts of the First Redaction remained immune to that revision.

12 I borrow this formulation from Shenk, *Aleksandr Nevskii*, 58.

A reference to the Suzdalian Land appears in a non-chronicle saint's life. The *Life of Metropolitan Petr*, the first metropolitan to move to Moscow, was probably written in the 1320s at the behest of the princely authorities of Moscow, where Petr became the patron and defender of the city. "Thus did God praise the Suzdalian Land, and the city called Moscow."¹³ In this case Moscow seems to be, if not the capital, then certainly the most praiseworthy city in the Suzdalian Land.

If the Primary Redaction of Nevskii's "Life" were composed in the 1280s it could have been utilized by the Older Recension of the *Novgorod First Chronicle*. It was not. In that chronicle Metropolitan Kirill said at Nevskii's funeral Nevskii had laboured for "Novgorod and the entire Rus' Land." However, the Older Recension did reference the Suzdalian Land s.a. 1304, where the chronicler noted the great "troubles" (*zamiatnia*) in the Suzdalian Land resulting from the feud between Princes Mikhail' of Tver and Iurii Daniilovich of Moscow.¹⁴

The Archeographic Commission manuscript of the *Novgorod First Chronicle* records that on Nevskii's death Prince Ivan Daniilovich (Kalita) received the charter from the Horde for the entire Rus' Land, but that Metropolitan Petr left Volhynia to travel to Moscow, unsaid: to Ivan Kalita in the Suzdalian Land.¹⁵

The Younger Recension of the *Novgorod First Chronicle* does contain passages from Nevskii's "Life" but not the setting sun. Nevskii attacked the Suzdalian Land. It repeats the Older Recension entry for 1304.¹⁶ But on Nevskii's death, erroneously dated to 1251, Metropolitan Kirill lauds Nevskii's labours for "Novgorod and Pskov and the Rus' strength (*сила*) [or variant: Land]." In 1378 the Tatars invaded the Suzdalian Land to attack Prince Dmitrii Konstantinovich.¹⁷ Which reading was original in the 1251 reference remains ambiguous but the influence of the Older Recension suggests the Rus' Land, not the Rus' "strength." Dmitrii Konstantinovich ruled in Nizhnii Novgorod, yet another city in the Suzdalian Land.

We might not expect Novgorod to be so generous toward a Northeastern Rus' prince as to associate him with the Rus' Land. In treaties with grand princes of Vladimir from 1264 to 1471, even though those princes came from Tver' and later Moscow, Novgorodian negotiators and scribes described the territory ruled by those grand princes as the "Suzdalian Land." Of course, the city of Vladimir, the grand-princely seat, was in the Suzdalian Land, but arguably Tver' was not. The earliest extant princely treaty was concluded in 1264 with Grand Prince Iaroslav Iaroslavovich of Tver'. It defined the prince's own realm as the Suzdalian Land.¹⁸ As discussed in Chapter Four, in the 1266 treaty with

¹³ V. A. Kuchkin, "Skazanie o smerti mitropolita Petra," *Trudy otdela drevne-russkoi literatury* 18 (1962): 59–79.

¹⁴ *NPL*, 83–84, 92.

¹⁵ *NPL*, 469.

¹⁶ *NPL*, 304, 332.

¹⁷ *NPL*, 306, 375. "Strength" means something like "total armed forces." Cf. Isoaho, *The Image of Aleksandr Nevskiy*, 181.

¹⁸ *GVNP*, no. 1: 9–10.

Iaroslav Iaroslavovich the Suzdalian Land again occurred.¹⁹ The 1270 treaty with Iaroslav Iaroslavovich rephrased an old clause forbidding him to deport people to read: "And you, prince, will not export people between the Suzdalian Land and Novgorod."²⁰ In Novgorod's treaty with Grand Prince Mikhail Iaroslavovich of Tver' in 1304–1305, the Suzdalian Land was referenced in a new clause guaranteeing by the authority of the Mongol khan the safe passage of Novgorodian merchants across the Suzdalian Land. The deportation prohibition clause now read "between the Suzdalian Land and the Novgorodian [Land]."²¹ The 1307–1308 Novgorod treaty with Mikhail Iaroslavovich affirmed the traditional boundary between the "Suzdalian Land and the Novgorodian [Land]" and restored the prior formulation of the population movement clause "between the Suzdalian Land and the Novgorodian [Land]," so that this phrase appeared twice in the same treaty.²² These innovations were faithfully preserved in the Tverian version of the same treaty.²³ The Suzdalian Land also appeared in the 1326–1327 treaty with Prince Aleksandr Mikhailovich of Tver'.²⁴ The 1371 Novgorod treaty with Prince Mikhail Aleksandrovich of Tver' restored the border definition to "between the Suzdalian Land and the Novgorodian [Land]" and the population movement prohibition to "between the Suzdalian Land and the Novgorodian [Land]."²⁵ The 1435 Novgorod treaty with Muscovite Grand Prince Vasilii II preserved the reference to the Suzdalian Land" and the depopulation clause "between the Suzdalian Land and the Novgorodian [Land]."²⁶ The 1456 Novgorod treaty with Grand Prince Vasilii II of Moscow continued the export of people clause "between the Suzdalian Land and the Novgorodian [Land]."²⁷ Finally, the 1471 Novgorod Treaty with Grand Prince Ivan III of Moscow still used the phrase the Suzdalian Land for customs control, and referred to the export of people "between the Suzdalian Land and the Novgorodian [Land]."²⁸ However, the Muscovite version of the 1471 treaty reads "Rus' Land."²⁹

S.a. 1152 the *Novgorod Fourth Chronicle* noted that Iurii Vladimirovich founded many churches in the Suzdalian Land, in the cities of Vladimir, Suzdal', and Iur'ev. References to the Suzdalian Land s.a. 1237 and 1240 derive from the *Laurentian Chronicle* but the *Novgorod Fourth Chronicle* makes the object of the Tatar invasion of 1237 both the Suzdalian Land and the Rostovian Land as if they were separate.³⁰

¹⁹ *GVNP*, no. 2: 10–11.

²⁰ *GVNP*, no. 3: 11–13.

²¹ *GVNP*, no. 6: 15–16,

²² *GVNP*, no. 9: 19–20.

²³ *GVNP*, no. 10: 21–22.

²⁴ *GVNP*, no. 14: 26–28.

²⁵ *GVNP*, no. 15: 28–30.

²⁶ *GVNP*, no. 19: 34–36.

²⁷ *GVNP*, no. 22: 39–41. But see below, Chapter Eight, for the reference to the Muscovite Land in the Muscovite version of this treaty.

²⁸ *GVNP*, no. 26: 45–48.

²⁹ *GVNP*, no. 27: 48–51.

³⁰ *PSRL*, 4, part 1 (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul'tury, 2000), 153 (1152), 217 (1237), 226 (1240).

In 1377, according to the *Novgorod Fourth Chronicle*, the Tatars attacked the Suzdalian Land. S.a. 1389, the text of the so-called *vita* of Dmitrii Donskoi identified Dmitrii Donskoi's widow, Evfrosiniia, daughter of the Grand Prince Dmitrii Konstantinovich (of Nizhnii Novgorod, not Suzdal'), as coming from the Suzdalian Land.³¹

The *Novgorod Fourth Chronicle* devotes considerable attention to the princely wars in 1216. It identifies the object of princely rivalry in 1216 as the "entire Suzdalian Land" and repeatedly mentions the strength and the regiments of the Suzdalian Land and the "entire Suzdalian Land" in the narrative. It also includes a speech by an unnamed boyar of Prince Iurii Vsevolodovich to him and to his brother Prince Iaroslav Vsevolodovich extolling the military prowess of the Suzdalian Land. This boyar exalts the Suzdalian Land by declaring that in the days of the princes' ancestors, grandfathers, and fathers, it had never happened that "any army entered the strong Suzdalian Land and left [having achieved its] goal. Even if the entire Rus' Land [including the] Galician, Kievan, Chernigovian, Riazanian, Smolenskan, and Novgorodian [Lands united], no one could succeed in opposing such strength [as possessed by the Suzdalian Land]." Princes Iurii and Iaroslav and their armies enthusiastically endorse the boyar's peroration.³²

The enumeration of "lands" that were part of the Rus' Land extends far beyond the original Dnieper River valley triangle of Kiev and Chernigov, minus Pereiaslavl'. Some of its elements, such as Chernigov and Smolensk, are not particularly known to have been described as "Lands." However, because the Suzdalian army was defeated, the *Novgorod Fourth Chronicle* was actually criticizing the arrogance of the Suzdalian Land's boosters. No other passage in Old Rus' literature known to me promulgates such overweening assertions of the military superiority of the Suzdalian Land to the Rus' Land. The clash of the two "lands" also entails that they were geographically discrete.

By contrast the *Sofia First Chronicle* modifies the 1152 reference to Iurii Volodimerovich by adding Pereiaslavl' to the list of cities in the Suzdalian Land in which he built churches. The *Sofia First Chronicle* contains some references to the Suzdalian Land s.a. 1216 found in the *Novgorod Fourth Chronicle* but not its extended narrative of the speech of Iurii's boyar praising the military might of the Suzdalian Land. The *Sofia First Chronicle* repeats the 1237, 1240, 1304, and 1389 references to the Suzdalian Land found in the *Novgorod Fourth Chronicle*, but changes the "Suzdalian Land" to Suzdal' s.a. 1377 and inserts the entire First Redaction of Nevskii's "Life," although somewhat contaminated by other verbiage. In 1246 Iaroslav restores the Suzdalian Land after Batu's depredations. Nevru'i's attack on the Suzdalian Land derives from Nevskii's "Life." Iaroslav suffered greatly on behalf of the Rus' Land. On Nevskii's death the sun set in the Rus' Land, not the Suzdalian Land, but Nevskii "laboured for the Rus' Land and Novgorod and Pskov."³³

31 *PSRL*, 4/1:306–7 (1377), 352 (1389).

32 *PSRL*, 4/1:188–89, 191, 193.

33 *PSRL*, 5:160 (1152), 172 (1216), 173 (1237), 175 (1240), 186 (1246), 191 (1262 for the setting sun on Nevskii's death), 204 (1304), 236 (1377), 243n* (1389).

The inconsistency in “land” terminology in the *Sofia First Chronicle* stands out. Nevskii’s father Iaroslav restores the Suzdalian Land, but suffered for the Rus’ Land. The region in which Nevskii acts remains largely identified as the Suzdalian Land, but with Nevskii’s death the sun sets in the Rus’ Land, for which Nevskii laboured according to a passage borrowed from the *Novgorod First Chronicle*, Older Recension.

Chronicles from the second half of the fifteenth century continued to repeat earlier references to the Suzdalian Land. For example, the *Suzdal’ Chronicle* regurgitates references to the Suzdalian Land from the *Laurentian Chronicle* for 1216, 1237, and 1250, but adds the passages from the *Novgorod Fourth Chronicle* containing Suzdalian boasting in 1216.³⁴ The *Pskov Second Chronicle* contains the two references to the Suzdalian Land of the First Redaction of Nevskii’s “Life,” on Nevruī and the setting sun.³⁵

Later chronicles also adduced novel references. The *Tsar’s Copy* of the *Sofia First Chronicle* revises an allusion to the founding of the city of Vladimir by St. Vladimir in 990 by describing him as travelling from Kiev to the Suzdalian Land to do so.³⁶ The *Moscow Chronicle Compilation of the End of the Fifteenth Century* criticizes Andrei Bogoliubskii s.a. 1162 for aspiring to become autocrat in the “entire Suzdalian Land,” which definitely, but atypically, accords the phrase a political context. In recounting Nevskii’s funeral it omits the setting sun metaphor but then redundantly describes him as having laboured “for the Rus’ Land, for Novgorod, for Pskov, and for the entire Rus’ Land.” Whether Novgorod and Pskov were part of the Rus’ Land, as ever, remains ambiguous. The chronicle specifies that in 1284 Prince Andrei Aleksandrovich made peace with Novgorod at Torzhok and then went to the Suzdalian Land, which clearly demarcates Novgorod and Torzhok as not part of the Suzdalian Land.³⁷ The Tverian chronicles rarely mentioned the Suzdalian Land, but one entry is quite curious. According to the *Tverian Miscellany* in 1262, the Rus’ revolted and expelled the Tatars from the Rostovian Land, specifically from Rostov, Suzdal’, Vladimir, and Iaroslavl’.³⁸ Clearly the concept of the Suzdalian Land did not have a monopoly on these metropolitan areas. The *Simeonov Chronicle* entry for 1293 on princely feuds illustrates the endemic inconsistency in “Land” terminology in chronicles: The Tatar Diuden’ led a raid in the Rus’ Land that did much evil to the Rus’ Land, but princely feuds created troubles in the Suzdalian Land.³⁹ According to the *Nikon Chronicle*, the largest and latest compendium of previous and original chronicle entries for early and medieval Rus’ history first compiled in the 1530s and then continued variously, in 1176 Iaropolk made himself grand prince of the Rostovian Land. In 1185 Luke was sent as metropolitan to the Suzdalian Land, the Vladimirian Land, and the “entire Rostovian Land.” In 1191 Vsevolod asked for Ioann as bishop of those three lands. In

34 “Suzdal’skaia letopis’,” in *Lavrent’evskaia letopis’: Suzdal’skaia letopis’*, ed. A. I. Tsepkov, *Russkie letopisi* 12 (Riazan’: Aleksandriia, 2001), 469, 470, 472 (all 1216), 490, 491 (1237), 496 (1250).

35 *Second Pskov Chronicle* in *PL*, 2:14, 15.

36 *PSRL*, 39 (Moscow: Nauka, 1994), 35.

37 *PSRL*, 25:72 (1169), 145 (1263), 156 (1284).

38 *Tverskii sbornik* in *PSRL*, 15, part 1 (Petrograd: Nauka, 1922).

39 *PSRL*, 18:82 (1293).

1206 Iaroslav left Pereiaslavl' (in the Dnieper River valley) to go to those three lands. S.a. 1216 the *Nikon Chronicle* presents a slightly revised version of the extended Suzdalian Land debate from the *Novgorod Fourth Chronicle*. In 1230 an earthquake struck those three lands as well as Kiev, Pereiaslavl', Novgorod, and the "entire Rus' Land." The *Nikon Chronicle* revised a passage in an earlier chronicle to read that in 1252 when Nevskii went to attend Khan Sartak, he left his brother Andrei in charge of "Vladimir and the Suzdalian Land."⁴⁰ In 1352 an epidemic struck Smolensk, Kiev, Chernigov, Suzdal', and the "entire Rus' Land." In 1420 an epidemic struck a different "entire Rus' Land," specifically Kostroma, Iaroslavl', Iur'ev, Vladimir, Suzdal', Pereiaslavl', Galich, Pskov, and Rostov. The *Nikon Chronicle* contains no original or derivative references to the Suzdalian Land in its annals after 1420.⁴¹ In the *Book of Degrees*, a thematic presentation of Rus' history variously dated to the 1560s and 1570s, Degree 8 on Nevskii largely follows the *Nikon Chronicle* and the Second Redaction of the "Life" concerning "lands": Nevruï invades the Suzdalian Land, but on Nevskii's death the sun sets in the Rus' Land.⁴² The *Great Menology*, a compendium of texts for reading compiled by Makarii, Archbishop of Novgorod and later Metropolitan, in the Moscow redaction contains the Vasilii-Varlaam Redaction of the "Life," called the Vladimirian Redaction by Mansikka. It remained ambivalent on Nevskii's location. Nevruï invades the Suzdalian Land but on Nevskii's death the sun had already set in the Rus' Land. The text urges its readers to rejoice that the most famous Aleksandr, who "enriched (?) the Rus' Land" (*Ruskia zemlia udobrenie*), did not come from Rome or Mt. Sinai, but was a wonder-worker in the Rus' Land. This redaction also mentions the churches in the Rus' Land.⁴³

In the late-fifteenth and early to mid-sixteenth-century chroniclers remembered the Suzdalian Land and even invented new historical references for it, but not contemporary affairs. Chroniclers had only inconsistent notions of its geographic parameters. They were far from averse to using other "Land" terms, including the Rostovian Land, to denote the same areas. Sometimes they required the Suzdalian Land to stick exclusively to the neighbourhood of the city of Suzdal' and share the "greater" Suzdalian Land with the Rostovian Land and the Vladimirian Land.

This survey of references to the Suzdalian Land suggests a number of conclusions. The Suzdalian Land never rose to the level of a major political myth. Only rarely did it even function as a concept, namely as the political domain of would-be autocrat Andrei Bogoliubskii. No one, even Bogoliubskii, ever fought for the Suzdalian Land.⁴⁴ No one,

⁴⁰ Donald Ostrowski, "An Ideal Prince for the Times: Alexander Nevskii in Rus' Literature," *Palaeoslavica* 16, no. 2 (2008): 259–71 at 267.

⁴¹ *PSRL*, 9–13 (Moscow, 1965), 9:64 (992), 255 (1176); 10:10 (1185), 19 (1191), 72 (1216), 99 (1230), 224 (1352); 11:236 (1420).

⁴² *Stepennaia kniga tsarstogo rodosloviia po drevneishim spiskam. Teksty i kommentarii*, ed. N. N. Pokrovskii and G. D. Lenkhoff, 3 vols., vol. 1: *Zhitie sv. Kniagini Ol'gi, Stepeni I–X* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskikh kul'tur, 2007), 327, 332. I consulted only Degree 8 in the *Book of Degrees*.

⁴³ Mansikka, *Zhitie Aleksandra Nevskogo*, Appendix, 31.

⁴⁴ Plokhyy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations*, 74 suggests that "one might assume" that Bogoliubskii's development of a centre in Suzdal' to rival Kiev "slowed adoption" of the myth of the Rus' Land in

even Nevskii, ever laboured or suffered for the Suzdalian Land. In almost all instances, references to the Suzdalian Land carried only a geographic meaning, and even then it did not come close to monopolizing the territory of Northeast Rus'. The 1216 entry on the "strength" of the Suzdalian Land was an exception in its hyperbolic praise of the military superiority of the Suzdalian Land, but in context such praise proved futile and unwarranted. The phrase Suzdalian Land lacked the ideological resonance of a concept. However, it was, to be sure, flexible enough to serve Novgorod's purposes as a neutral description of the Grand Principality of Vladimir, even if that throne were held by princes from Tver' or Moscow.

Revision of the "Suzdalian Land" to the "Rus' Land" in Metropolitan Kirill's eulogy was never expanded to entail systematic substitution of the latter for the former in any redaction of the "Life." Allusions to the Suzdalian Land persisted even when his sun set in the Rus' Land in chronicles.

While the phrase "Suzdalian Land" was never political, during the thirteenth and especially the early fourteenth century it was at least contemporary, if decreasingly so in the late fourteenth century. The chronicle tradition codified as it were in the *Nikon Chronicle*, which amalgamated many local chronicle traditions, does not contain a single contemporary reference to the Suzdalian Land in its annals after 1420. This did not preclude revision of previous allusions to the Suzdalian Land or even the introduction of new but still "historical" references to the Suzdalian Land.

The shift in the middle of the fifteenth century in most chronicle versions of Nevskii's "Life" to the setting sun in the Rus' Land was probably not coincidental. By the time of the compilation of the common source of the *Novgorod Fourth* and *Sofia I Chronicles*, Muscovite monopolization of the myth of the Rus' Land was complete.⁴⁵ The Rus' Land meant the Grand Principality of Moscow, which had already assimilated the Grand Principality of Vladimir. Affiliating Nevskii to the Rus' Land by changing one word in Metropolitan Kirill's eulogy in the Nevskii "Life" was all it took for Moscow to acquire Nevskii as a defender and symbol. Nevertheless, why the compiler of the *Sofia First Chronicle* made that change remains a separate issue.

The Suzdalian Land, even in its heyday of the twelfth to early fifteenth century, remained a contested geographic phrase. Unlike Novgorod or Pskov, the Northeast region of Kievan Rus' had its own princely line, or lines, the sine qua non for developing a political and/or ideological "Land" concept, even a myth. The mid-thirteenth to the mid-fourteenth century was a period of transition in the evolution of the myth of the Rus' Land. Thirteenth-century Galicia-Volhynia took advantage by claiming the legitimacy of being the Rus' Land, but in the northeast, which continued to describe the Kievan region as the Rus' Land, no alternative expression took advantage of that window of opportunity. The area had perhaps too many leading cities. Vladimir was considered the capital of the Suzdalian Land, but references to the Vladimirian and Rostovian Lands

the northeast. I would contend that a *translatio* of the Rus' Land to the northeast in the twelfth century would have been premature; the connection of the Rus' Land to Kiev remained far too strong at that time.

45 Halperin, "The Russian Land and the Russian Tsar."

diminished the fluctuating territorial scope of the Suzdalian Land. Beginning with the *vita* of Metropolitan Petr in the early fourteenth century, Moscow proclaimed itself the capital of the region. Because political authority followed whoever became grand prince of Vladimir, princes not only from Vladimir, Suzdal', and Rostov, but also Tver' and later exclusively Moscow exercised authority over the Suzdalian Land. Even so Novgorod could employ the phrase to restrain articulation of Tverian and Muscovite ambitions as grand princes of Vladimir to exert influence over the northwest. Eventually the translation of the Rus' Land to the northeast under Muscovite aegis made even the phrase the Muscovite Land superfluous. By no later than the second third of the fifteenth century, the Suzdalian Land had lost all currency even geographically. The isolated contexts in which the Suzdalian Land achieved prominence, as the object of a putative autocrat, the area mourning a saint, or a military powerhouse, never took hold. Yet, however inconsistently and ambivalently, the phrase Suzdalian Land continued to crop up in new if only historical narratives through the sixteenth century in chronicles and variants of Nevskii's "Life." The fluidity and manipulability of the phrase Suzdalian Land probably contributed to its durability, but not its significance.