



Review Article

“National Identity in Premodern Rus”

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Abstract

This article is a commentary on some of the conclusions of Serhii Plokhy's *The Origin of the Slavic Nations. Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*. Plokhy addressed ethnocultural (national) identities and national identity projects from the tenth to the early eighteenth century. This essay is concerned with Kievan Rus', the Mongol impact on the East Slavs, and Muscovite history from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. It offers alternative interpretations both of the historical background which Plokhy outlines for the evolution of East Slavic peoples and of Plokhy's interpretations of various historical, political, religious and literary texts. The chronology of the *translatio* of the myth of the Rus' Land from Kievan Rus' to Moscow is still a matter of contention. In synthesizing the views of such historians as Edward Keenan and Donald Ostrowski, Plokhy has attributed too much influence to the Mongols on Russian institutional and cultural history. Plokhy has failed to be consistent in his application of Keenan's criticism of sources and Keenan's concept of sixteenth-century Muscovite society and culture. Finally, Plokhy somewhat oversimplifies the cultural heterogeneity of Ivan the Terrible and Ivan the Terrible's Muscovy. These criticisms are a tribute to Plokhy's challenging but inspiring monograph.

Keywords

Kiev, Moscow, Kievan Inheritance, Tatar Yoke, Rus' Land, Ivan the Terrible

Serhii Plokhy's *The Origins of the Slavic Nations. Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus* is an “ambitious, revisionist and impressive” survey of “national” (ethnocultural) identities among the East Slavs from the tenth to the beginning of the eighteenth century. It is “the most integrated history of the relations among three East Slavic peoples” available and “has set the bar

very high for future historians who are stimulated by this superb book to address the question of East Slavic national identity.”¹

In this book Plokhy expanded the scope of his research from early modern Ukrainian history and modern Ukrainian and Russian historiography to include the history of Northeastern Rus’ during the Mongol and Muscovite periods. Evaluating historiography and sources for these centuries required him to make choices among competing interpretations and to select those conclusions which he found convincing. Plokhy interprets historical, religious, literary and political texts embodying national identity projects within the context of a broad canvas of East Slavic history. Each theory resonates with both all previous and contemporary theories, thus becoming part and parcel of the ebb and flow of national identity projects over the course of pre-modern East Slavic history. In effect each theory is one tile within a huge mosaic. “No specialist will agree with all of Plokhy’s choices”² concerning general or intellectual history. This essay will comment on some of the tiles Plokhy has selected. Although these particular tiles constitute only on a small fraction of Plokhy’s magisterial monograph, changing even a single tile affects the mosaic as a whole, the total picture that Plokhy has masterfully constructed. The enormous value of his contribution to scholarship cannot possibly be impaired by such a critique; indeed, in the best of all worlds fine-tuning some of the tiles should improve the artistry of his overall image. It is convenient to discuss this material primarily in chronological sequence, beginning with Kyivan Rus’ and proceeding to the Mongol period, the rise of Moscow, and “high” Muscovite history through the sixteenth century and Ivan the Terrible.

Plokhy begins with Kyivan Rus’, which he proposes to “denationalize,” rejecting the Soviet concept of an “Old Rus’ nation” (*drevnerusskaia narodnost’*), still prevalent post-1991, and separating Kyivan Rus’ as a multi-ethnic state from the national histories of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. This applies to the word Rus’ and to the concept of the Rus’ Land. One consequence of this approach is to vitiate attempts by historians to decide, in the title of one of Plokhy’s sub-chapters, “Who has the better claim?” (45–48) to the Kyivan inheritance. Plokhy does not cite recent treatments by Western scholars who

¹ Serhii Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations. Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Page references will be given in parentheses in the text. Quotations are from Charles J. Halperin, review of Plokhy, *Origins of the Slavic Nations* in the *Canadian Journal of History / Annales canadiennes d’histoire* 42 (2007): 164–66, here 164, 166.

² *Ibid.*, 165.

have treated the question of the Kyivan inheritance as real, not perceptual, such as Jaroslaw Pelenski's "objective" attribution of percentages to each contender.³ However, Plokhy's approach does not invalidate analysis of rival claims by Muscovy, Lithuania or Ukraine to the Kyivan inheritance; it merely relegates such pretensions entirely to the realm of ideology. Despite the multi-ethnicity of Kyivan Rus', its literati did formulate a hybrid national identity-building model compounded of their Varangian and Slavic backgrounds and Christian profession.

Plokhy repeatedly mentions the multi-ethnic composition of the population of Kyivan Rus', which included Varangians and Finno-Ugric peoples. Although in the course of the volume Plokhy frequently observes that subsequent East Slavic polities were also multi-ethnic, for example, the Lithuanian Grand Principality had East Slavs, all Northeastern Rus' principalities Finno-Ugrians, Plokhy might have simplified his point by generalizing it: *Every* polity described in this volume was multi-ethnic, a factor which forces historians to view all national identity projects through a different lens.

Turning to post-Kyivan times, Plokhy makes frequent use of the concept of appanages (*udel*). He notes that Kyivan Rus' disintegrated into appanage principalities (49), that the inhabitants of appanage principalities thought of them as part of the Rus' Land (83), that the appanage principalities of the Northeast were incorporated into the Muscovite political structure (111), that the autonomous lands and principalities of the Grand Principality of Lithuania continued their "appanage-era tradition" of regional loyalty and identity (112), that Muscovy replaced the multiple identities of appanage principalities with a single Muscovite identity (152), that during the Time of Troubles (*Smutnoe vremia*) Muscovy did not disintegrate "into a dozen or so appanage principalities" (221), and that the appanage principalities had separate identities in the post-Kyiv period (355). The concept of appanages thus infuses Plokhy's narrative of medieval East Slavic history even long after they had disappeared.

This conception of an "appanage system" has been widespread in Russian historiography. The appanage (*udel*) period was enshrined in Vasilii Kliuchevsky's periodization, although Aleksandr Presniakov noted its changing meaning. It is misleading to apply the concept of appanage to principalities

³ Jaroslaw Pelenski, *The Contest for the Legacy of Kievan Ruys'* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1998), xi-xxii: "if one were distribute objectively the legacy of Kievan Rus' among the three contending successors in approximate quantitative terms, the result would be: Ukraine – sixty-five to seventy-five percent; Russia – fifteen to twenty percent; and Belarus – ten to fifteen percent."

which until their incorporation into the Muscovite state thought of themselves as “grand principalities,” like Tver,⁴ Riazan, and Nizhnii Novgorod-Suzdal, as if they were identical to the minor properties allocated by a senior prince to his junior relatives, brothers or cousins which were legitimately labeled “appanages.” Tver was as much a grand principality as Moscow, Kashin was an appanage of Tver just as Serpukhov, Staritsa or Uglich were appanages of Moscow. It would almost be preferable to speak of “feudal disintegration” than of “disintegration into appanage principalities,” although when Plokhy refers to the “feudal” war in Lithuania in the first half of the fifteenth century (98) he means a civil war. The “appanage” system is a vast topic which remains unresolved, but it is apposite to observe that Kliuchevskii utilized the “appanage period” as a ploy to avoid identifying a “Mongol period,” to which he was emotionally averse, since appanages began before the Mongol conquest and continued after the overthrow of Mongol rule.⁵ Plokhy employs the appanage terminology but ascribes a degree of influence to the Mongols in Russian history which Kliuchevskii would have abhorred.

Discussing the Mongol period of East Slavic history, Plokhy describes the thirteenth-century Grand Prince of Galicia-Volhynia Danylo as “the only Rus’ prince who dared to engage the Mongols militarily after 1240” (51). This is somewhat disingenuous since it delicately avoids mentioning that during the Mongol conquest campaign against Kyiv of 1239-1240 Danylo ran for his life, that after 1240 all the Riurikids who had resisted the Mongol conquest were already dead, and that Danylo made personal obeisance to Batu in 1250. Subsequently Danylo did sometimes resist, fortifying cities and turning away Tatar officials, but he never overthrew Tatar rule. Plokhy’s description of Danylo unfortunately echoes the myth of Ukrainian scholarship of heroic Ukrainian resistance to the Mongols compared to the servile Muscovites.⁶

Following Donald Ostrowski’s usage, Plokhy refers to the Mongol successor state on the Volga as the Qipchak Khanate (52). Ostrowski has good reasons

⁴ This essay follows the spelling and transliteration of Plokhy, *Origins of the Slavic Nations*, thus Tver, not Tver’.

⁵ Charles J. Halperin, “Kliuchevskii and the Tatar Yoke,” *Canadian-American Slavic Studies / Revue Canadienne Américaine d’Etudes Slaves* 34, no. 4 (Winter, 2000): 385-408, reprinted in Halperin, *Russia and the Mongols. Slavs and the Steppe in Medieval and Early Modern Russia*, ed. Victor Spinei and George Bilavski (Bucarest: Editura Academica Romane, 2007), Chapter 15, 239-63 (the Table of “Contents” pagination is incorrect).

⁶ Charles J. Halperin, *The Tatar Yoke. The Image of the Mongols in Medieval Russia*. Corrected edition (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2009), 53-57.

for not using the anachronistic term “the Golden Horde,” but his substitute is inadequate.⁷ Ostrowski’s term confuses readers. Plokhy refers to Qipchak khans (52) as well as the Mongol (one could say Tatar) khans (134). Unfortunately it is too easy to think that a Qipchak Khanate will have Qipchak Khans, but there were no Cuman / Polovtsian khans under Mongol rule. That Plokhy is not alone in being misled by Ostrowski’s terminology is illustrated by Marshall Poe, who infers that the inhabitants of the Qipchak Khanate were Qipchaks, although without any system he also refers to Tatars, the Tatar Yoke, and Mongols.⁸

Plokhy labels Mamai “a contestant for the throne of the Golden Horde” (52). As a non-Chingissid the emir Mamai could never have aspired to the “throne” of the “Golden Horde,” here not called the Qipchak Khanate. He was a khan-maker. To understand Rus’-Tatar relations historians must be as sensitive to Chingissid genealogy as the Russians were for centuries following the Mongol conquest.

Plokhy writes that the Mongols never questioned the “imagined community” of Rus’ (83). Without chronicles from the Juchid ulus⁹ we do not know very much about what the Mongols thought. Presniakov phrased the “imagined community” of Rus’ as “the Rus’ *ulus*.” extrapolating from a term of steppe origin used by the chronicles, *tsarev ulus* (ulus of the khan). Since it is attributed to Rus’ princes addressing the Mongol khans, it is probably as close to Tatar perceptions as we are likely to get.¹⁰

Plokhy pays consideration attention to the concept of the “Rus’ Land” (*russkaia zemlia*), a major historical myth of the East Slavs from the tenth century on. Because Kyivan Rus’ was multi-ethnic, logically it would have

⁷ Charles J. Halperin, “The Place of Rus’ in the Golden Horde,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 14 (2005), 21 n. 2, reprinted in Halperin, *Russia and the Mongols*, Chapter 20, 318 n. 2. Beginning with Khan Tokhtamysh the khans of the Horde were Ordoids, not Batuids, so it was incorrect to propose the “Jochid (Juchid) or Batuid ulus” as a substitute for the “Golden Horde”; only “Jochid (Juchid) ulus” is valid.

⁸ Marshall Poe, *The Russian Moment in World History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 30-37. Poe’s misconception that Ivan III loved to call himself “khan” (36) is probably a misunderstanding of the presence of Ivan’s name on coinage in Arabic, “Iban.” Ivan III never called himself “khan.”

⁹ Charles J. Halperin, “The Missing Golden Horde Chronicles and Historiography in the Mongol Empire,” *Mongolian Studies* 23 (2000): 1-15, reprinted in idem, *Russia and the Mongols*, Chapter 16, 264-76. The pagination in the Table of “Contents” is incorrect.

¹⁰ Charles J. Halperin, “*Tsarev ulus*: Russia in the Golden Horde,” *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 23, no. 2 (April-June, 1982): 257-63, reprinted in idem, *Russia and the Mongols*, Chapter 5, 77-83. The pagination in the Table of “Contents” is incorrect.

been difficult for the Rus' Land to be an ethnic concept. In fact its usage was dynastic.¹¹ When the concept of the Rus' Land moved from the Dnipro valley to the Volga-Oka Mesopotamia is a major question in the chronology of the cultural evolution of the northeast principalities because the Rus' Land was the foundation stone of building an identity based upon the Kyivan inheritance. In addressing the process of the *translatio* of the concept of the Rus' Land from the region of Kyiv to that of Moscow,¹² Plokhy begins by explaining why he discarded three sources commonly cited as relevant to this theme. In each case his dismissal can be disputed.

Plokhy begins by rejecting the “Tale of the Destruction of the Rus' Land” (*Slovo o pogibeli russkoi zemli*) as evidence of Kyivan attitudes on the grounds that it was written in Northeast Rus (67 n. 2), but he later adds that the dating of this text to the thirteenth century is “questionable” (91 n. 19). If the text were written in Vladimir-Suzdalia it would attest to the translation of the myth of the Rus' Land from Kyiv to the Northeast whenever it was written, but Plokhy never declares when he thinks it was written and never utilizes it in his discussion of the evolution of the concept of the Rus' Land. Looking back the present author was far from consistent in analyzing this text, first arguing that the text was composed in Kyiv, precisely because it referred to the Rus' Land, not the Suzdalian Land,¹³ but later, without realizing it, dating it to the “latter part” of the thirteenth century when it was unlikely to have been written in Kyiv.¹⁴ It hardly clarified matters to cite Begunov's conclusion that the text was written in the Northeast.¹⁵ In retrospect, given that the manuscripts of the text, found in Pskov and Riga, link it to the vita of Aleksandr Nevskii, prince of Novgorod and Grand Prince of Vladimir, it would seem

¹¹ Charles J. Halperin, “The Concept of the *ruskaia zemlia* and Medieval National Consciousness from the Tenth to the Fifteenth Centuries,” *Nationalities Papers* 8, no. 1 (Spring, 1980): 75–86.

¹² There are bibliographic inaccuracies in Plokhy, *Origin of the Slavic Nations*, 67 n. 53. Plokhy's first reference to Halperin, “The Concept of the Russian Land,” does not give a complete citation: Halperin, “The Concept of the Russian Land from the Ninth to the Fourteenth Century,” *Russian History / Histoire russe* 2, no. 1 (1975): 29–38. Plokhy describes Halperin, “The Russian Land and the Russian Tsar: The Emergence of Muscovite Ideology, 1380–1408,” *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte* 23 (1976): 7–103, as a revised and augmented version of the previous article, but in fact both derive from a 1973 Columbia University doctoral dissertation, Halperin, “The Russian Land and the Russian Tsar: The Emergence of Muscovite Ideology, 1380–1408.”

¹³ Halperin, “The Concept of the Russian Land,” 33, 35.

¹⁴ Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 121.

¹⁵ Halperin, *The Tatar Yoke*, 46.

plausible to ascribe the text to a Kyivan author just after the Mongol conquest of the city in 1240, probably writing in the Northwest or the Northeast. In either case the *Slovo o pogibeli russkoi zemli* is highly relevant to the evolution of the concept of the Rus' Land. It demonstrates continued adherence to the myth of the Rus' Land even in the immediate aftermath of the Mongol conquest.

The same would apply to the famous, if not infamous, "Tale of Ihor's Campaign" (*Slovo o polku Igoreve*), which Plokhy rejects because of Edward Keenan's objections to its authenticity (67 n. 2). Obviously if the text were composed in the eighteenth century by the Bohemian Slavist Josef Dobrovsky it would not have much value for twelfth-century Rus' history. However, Keenan's objections have been convincingly refuted.¹⁶ Therefore it should be not only permissible but obligatory, even giving the sceptics their due, to employ the text as a reflection of Kyivan attitudes, especially concerning the virtually all-East Slavic geographic scope of the Rus' Land in the epic.

The last source is the "Tale of Destruction of the Riazan Land" (*Povest' o razorenii Riazani Batyem*), which Plokhy discounts because it is not found in medieval miscellanies (67 n. 2). This is technically correct, since sixteenth-century manuscripts should be described as "early modern" rather than "medieval," but unless one automatically assumes that a text can be no older than its oldest manuscript, that does not solve the problem of its dating. Even for the sake of argument dating the text to the sixteenth century would still accord it value as a reflection of the kinds of regional identities, both among Ruthenian and Northeastern Rus', which Plokhy discusses so well. Plokhy's translation of the title of the text foregrounds its major regional identity, the Riazan Land, not the Rus' Land.¹⁷

Originally, using the data in the reconstructed Trinity Chronicle (*Troitskaia letopis'*), the present author without much precision dated the *translatio* of the Rus' Land from the Dnipro valley to the Northeast during the second half of the thirteenth and the first half of the fourteenth centuries.¹⁸ Plokhy perceptively points out that this dating was never revised following the reclassification of the Trinity Chronicle as a invalid source because it is a reconstruction,

¹⁶ Charles J. Halperin, "Authentic? Not authentic? Not authentic, again! Edward L. Keenan, *Josef Dobrovsky and the Origins of the Igor' Tale*," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 54, no. 4 (2006): 556–71.

¹⁷ Halperin, *The Tatar Yoke*, 37–42.

¹⁸ The apparent shift in dating of the termination of the *translatio* by a decade cited in Plokhy, *Origins of the Slavic Nations*, 59 n. 59 is the result of convoluted prose, not conviction.

not a “text.” Plokhy backtracks Mikhail Priselkov’s reconstruction from Karamzin and finds that of three Trinity Chronicle passages which refer to the Rus’ Land, two were Priselkov’s interpolations from other chronicles and only one comes from Karamzin. That passage sub anno 1332 probably applied the term to the region around Moscow, but Plokhy concludes that this is insufficient evidence on which to date the *translatio* (67–69). This chronicle entry, while unconfirmed, remains, nevertheless, suggestive.

Without the Trinity Chronicle, the *translatio* of the Rus’ Land can only be traced in written sources using the Kulikovo Cycle. Plokhy concurs with Ostrowski and the current wisdom in dating the texts as fairly late, but there are legitimate reservations about this dating which have never been satisfactorily addressed.¹⁹ Based upon Ostrowski’s textual dating Plokhy dates the Muscovite *translatio* of the Rus’ Land to the second half of the fifteenth century. Thus he labels the chronicle depiction of the Muscovite campaign against Novgorod in 1471 under Ivan III as one of first expressions of the Muscovite “founding myth” of Kyivan origin and the *translatio* theory (137).

This chronology can be pushed back without relying on the Kulikovo cycle by employing Muscovite coinage. Coins of Vasilii II²⁰ which Gustave Alef dated to the 1440s accorded him the title *ospodar’ russkoi zemli* (sovereign of the Rus’ Land) or *ospodar’ vseia zemli russkie* (sovereign of the entire Rus’ Land).²¹ In addition, the reluctance of the mid fifteenth century Tverian writer Foma to describe Tver as the Rus’ Land, instead of the Tverian Land, derived from his recognition that Moscow had already monopolized that concept.²² While dating the *translatio* to the middle instead of the “second half” of the fifteenth century may not seem like much of a change, it shifts the process

¹⁹ Plokhy observes that in my analysis of Salmina’s dating I did not “challenge” Ostrowski’s views (70). However, only in English common law does silence imply consent. The article in question raised reservations because of the Mongol issue about Salmina’s dating and interpretation of the “chronicle tales” of the battle of Kulikovo, Tokhtamysh’s sack of Moscow, and the death of Dmitrii Donskoi which are also applicable to the Kulikovo Cycle and Ostrowski’s conclusions. My dissent from Ostrowski’s dating and interpretation have been expressed more than once; see Halperin, review of Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross-Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier 1304–1547*, in *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 30, no. 2 (1999): 517–18.

²⁰ Plokhy’s reference to relations between metropolitan Cyprian and Vasilii II (Plokhy, *Origins of the Slavic Nations*, 103) is a typographical error; he meant Vasilii I.

²¹ Gustave Alef, “The Political Significance of the Inscriptions on Muscovite Coinage in the Reign of Vasilii II,” *Speculum* 34 (1959): 6, reprinted in idem, *Rulers and Nobles in Fifteenth-Century Muscovy* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1983), Article I. As Alef was interested only in the title “sovereign” he did not discuss the allusion to the Rus’ Land.

²² Halperin, “The Concept of the *raskaia zemlia* and Medieval National Consciousness,” 80.

from the reign of Ivan III to that of his father, Vasilii II, in vastly different political circumstances. This also slightly reduces the chronological gap to the 1332 entry in the Trinity Chronicle, which might attest to the earliest phase of the *translatio*.²³

The *Oration Concerning the Life and Passing of Grand Prince Dmitrii Ivanovich* (*Slovo o zhitii i prestavlenii velikogo kniazia Dmitriia Ivanovicha, tsar'ia rus'skago*), a chronicle tale, is not part of the Kulikovo cycle but is considered closely related intellectually to it. Plokhy is not consistent in dating its Expanded Redaction, claiming that “It is clear that the text was at least heavily revised (if not actually written) in the second half of fifteenth century, or even later” (72 n. 68) but also that it was written “presumably” in the late fifteenth century” (73). The textual history of the Oration is not that all that “clear” and the Oration could have been written in the middle of the fifteenth century. Moreover, it is germane to note that Plokhy’s use of the text is not entirely compatible with his dating. According to the *Oration* Prince Ivan I Kalita was the “gatherer of the Rus’ Land” (*sobiratel' russkoi zemli*). No other Muscovite prince is so described, “the Rus’ Land” is in the singular. Kliuchevskii with his genius for picking *le mot juste* to characterize entire epochs fastened upon this description of Kalita, applied it to the entire Daniilovich clan, and projected it as the guiding policy of the Moscow house. Kliuchevskii’s literary license became standard in historiography. Plokhy describes the Moscow princes as “gatherers” of the Rus’ lands” (80) and refers to Moscow as the primary “gatherer of the Rus’ lands” (p. 124, Plokhy’s quotation marks). Note Plokhy’s use of the plural “lands.” Plokhy even writes that Gediminas was the “alleged Lithuanian “gatherer” of the Rus’ lands” (95, Plokhy’s quotation marks around “gatherer”).²⁴ The epithet “gatherer of the Rus’ Land” should not be used to apply to Muscovite princes in general and may be applied to Ivan Kalita only as retrospective mythology. Plokhy collaborates in Kliuchevskii’s

²³ The later history of the concept of the Rus’ Land remains unexplored. Plokhy does not discuss its appearance in sixteenth-century Muscovite texts. This would be particularly interesting after 1547 when Muscovy becomes an “empire” (*tsarstvie* or *tsarstvo*) in addition to a “land.” In addition, the imperial theme motivated the beginning of a shift to the adjective “all-Russian” (*rossiiskii*) in addition to “Russian” (*russkii*). Yet the Rus’ Land survived as a concept even into the seventeenth century. Kuzma Minin during the Time of Troubles had a vision of St Sergius, “the protector of the Muscovite realm and the whole Russian Land” (215-16). Obviously historical invocations of the Rus’ Land, lifted from earlier sources, were a major source of the perpetuation of the concept, but it was also applied contemporaneously.

²⁴ This phrase does not appear to be a quote from a source but could be an extrapolation from secondary works.

anachronistic appropriation of the text to apply much earlier than Plokhy's dating would permit.

Plokhy, following Yitzhak Brudny, depicts the celebration of the six-hundredth anniversary of the battle of Kulikovo in 1980 as a political response to Russian disenchantment with the invasion of Afghanistan and the rise of the Solidarity movement in Poland. The Soviet authorities reluctantly let Ukrainians celebrate an invented fifteen-hundredth anniversary of Kyiv in 1982 (130–31). Without denying this political context, the anniversary would have been celebrated anyway, and in any event it generated a fair amount of serious scholarship in which Ukrainians and Belarusians were permitted to participate by asserting the presence of their ancestors among the Muscovite army.²⁵

Turning to Lithuanian Rus' from the same period Plokhy concludes that in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth centuries the Rus' cultural tradition in the Grand Principality of Lithuania after Kreva and Horodlo started competing with a new Catholic cultural tradition which had an "equally developed, if not superior, cultural product" (97). Cultures are neither "superior" nor "inferior," although adherents of a culture may think so. Referring to "cultural supremacy" (98 n. 39), on the other hand, is another matter entirely, since it describes a factual situation often determined by extraneous factors.

In some ways the reign of Ivan IV, better known as Ivan the Terrible, is the culmination politically and ideologically of the rise of Moscow. Certainly it is often the linchpin of evaluations of Muscovite society, culture, and institutions. Ivan the Terrible casts a huge shadow over Muscovite history. It is no surprise that Plokhy devotes much attention to his reign and to identity projects formulated during that reign. Unfortunately Ivan the Terrible is such a contradictory figure that it is difficult to be consistent when writing about him. That Plokhy is no more successful in avoiding the pitfalls of analyzing Ivan the Terrible's reign than specialists on sixteenth-century Muscovy should not be held against him.

Plokhy begins his discussion of "high" Muscovy by endorsing the views of Keenan and Nancy Kollmann on the importance of clan loyalty in Muscovy to the exclusion of "national" identity, but modifies this by noting Valerie

²⁵ Charles J. Halperin, "The Six-Hundredth Anniversary of the Battle of Kulikovo Field, 1380–1980, in Soviet Historiography," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies / Revue Canadienne Américaine d'Etudes* 18, no. 3 (Fall, 1984): 298–310, reprinted in idem, *Russia and the Mongols*, Chapter 10, 132–55. The pagination in the Table of "Contents" is incorrect. This article ignores the political context proposed by Brudny.

Kivelson's depiction of vertical, as well as horizontal, social ties in the late fifteenth and sixteenth century (122–23). Plokhy writes that "Ivan IV used his diplomatic skills and later often employed brute force to unite his country, relentlessly persecuting local elites and suppressing anything that smacked of opposition to central control," which led to the Time of Troubles (123). Ivan faced problems generated by rapid expansion and the "strife between boyar groupings that he had witnessed in childhood." Ivan began as a peacemaker, convoking *zemskie sobory* (assemblies of the land), initiating reforms. While he was a successful empire-builder in the east, he encountered problems when he turned west. The *Oprichnina* was "an apparent attempt to establish his unlimited rule and build a utopian authoritarian state." The victims of his terror included elite and urban citizens.

The jury is still out on Ivan himself, his puzzling behavior and contradictory policies. It might be argued, however, that Ivan the Terrible left his state more centralized than he found it, with a political and ethnocultural identity stronger and more distinct than those of its imagined "others." While Ivan's policies can be blamed for creating the preconditions for the social upheaval of the Time of Troubles, they also helped Muscovy survive as a state united and indivisible (125–26).

"Ivan the Terrible strongly believed in the Kyivan roots of his dynasty and the state" (126). The "sixteenth-century tyrant" saw the conquest of Kazan as proof that he was tsar (141). "Ethnicity and religion" did not matter very much to Ivan, who "considered himself a descendent of Augustus and a German by nationality," which is why his claims to Kazan were expressed in the notion of patrimony (142). Ivan did not abandon his religious prejudices but acted pragmatically in dealing with adherents of faiths other than Orthodox Christianity (150). Ivan "believed" in Muscovy's virtual past, the Kyivan succession (151–52) Ivan's reluctance in 1582 to discuss the East-West Church split with Possevino without the metropolitan derived from the Muscovite view that their religion stopped at their borders (152). Muscovite identity focused on the person of the ruler, even Ivan, "regardless of his sometimes bizarre behavior." Ivan was imagined by his literati not as a tyrannical autocrat but a meek ruler in harmony with the boyars (159). Herasym Smotrytsky and Prince Kostiantyn Ostrozky, Ruthenian contemporaries of Ivan IV, called Ivan "a sovereign and grand prince pious and most resplendent in Orthodoxy" (179). Ivan's contribution to the "imperialization" (Plokhy's quotes) of the Russian psyche "looms much more prominently than that of Peter the Great" (296). Summarizing, Ivan was an erratic tyrant who was lauded as a bastion of Orthodoxy by his own literati and later generations of both Muscovite

and Ruthenian writers. He was a reformer and conqueror whose bizarre actions nearly led to the destruction of his realm under his successors. In other words, he remains a paradox.

Amid the vast scholarship on Ivan Plokhy cites Ruslan Skrynnikov, Keenan, and Andrei Pavlov and Maureen Perrie, but it goes without saying that this does not exhaust what Plokhy has read on Ivan. Every statement anyone has ever made about Ivan has probably been contested by someone. A few examples will suffice. The Assembly of the Land of 1566 was probably the first and only such assembly during Ivan's reign. It remains peculiar that Ivan is given credit for building a united, centralized state when he divided the realm into the *Oprichnina* and the *Zemshchina*. Ivan's literati hardly confined themselves to propagating a single image of Ivan. In addition to his piety and humility he was also celebrated for martial vigor and being "awe-inspiring" (*grozno*). Ivan's reluctance to discuss the Catholic-Orthodox Church Schism with Possevino had nothing to do with Muscovite religious exclusivity. Airing theological disagreements between Muscovy and the Pope would hardly have been conducive to inducing Possevino to negotiate a truce between Poland and Muscovy. Ivan's actions in this instance were motivated by diplomacy, not religion. Of course these counter-assertions would also be contested by other historians.

There is an apparent anomaly in Plokhy's depiction of Ivan's attitude toward Kazan. The Court and the Church, Plokhy observes, advanced religious arguments in favor of conquest. Although Ivan's daily routine was saturated with Christian observances, Plokhy pronounces Ivan indifferent to religion yet possessing religious prejudices he did not discard when treating Kazan Muslims pragmatically. Religion was not part of the patrimonial claims to Kazan, but Plokhy declares that "Muscovite rulers in general and Ivan the Terrible in particular regarded their own faith and church as the only true ones in the world" (146). Ivan invoked religion in describing the conquest of Kazan to European countries, but denied it in correspondence with the Ottoman Sultan. The concept of patrimony was used to justify the conquest of Kazan not because religion was irrelevant but because patrimony was a more efficacious international motive, especially in dealing with the Muslim rulers. Pragmatism in policy and prudence in diplomatic expression need not preclude strong religious identity.

One of the most influential contemporary American historians of the reign of Ivan the Terrible is Keenan, whose publications manifest a thoroughly integrated interpretation of Ivan IV. Keenan's evaluations of Muscovite culture, Muscovite sources and Ivan's personality dovetail. To Keenan there was a sharp divide between the cultures of the Court and Church. Ivan was illiterate and

like the entire “secular” Court totally alien to Church identity projects. Ivan had no interest in the Kyivan inheritance and his diplomatic references to Kyiv as the Muscovite “patrimony” did not mean what modern historians take them to mean (131–32, 142 n. 46).²⁶ The conquest of Kazan was a last-resort pragmatic solution to a foreign policy problem uninfluenced by religion.

Plokyh’s attitude toward Keenan’s conclusions about Muscovite sources and social and cultural history is not uniform. Plokyh declares that he accepts Keenan’s scepticism about Muscovite sources and therefore does not cite the Ivan-Kurbinskii Correspondence or Kurbsky’s “History.” The only sources in Ivan’s name which Plokyh cites are his 1579 and 1581 epistles to Stefan Bathory, from which, to be sure, Plokyh draws conclusions about Ivan’s acceptance of the Kyivan inheritance antithetical to Keenan’s interpretation.²⁷ Yet Plokyh subscribes to the notion of ideological cooperation between Court and Church literati (158, 202) and attributes to Ivan the ethnocultural identity expressed in ecclesiastical sources such as the Great Menology (*Velikii Cheti’ Minei*) or the Book of Degrees (*Stepennaia kniga*) which Keenan thinks irrelevant to Ivan and the Court. Plokyh notes that in the second half of the sixteenth century “some Muscovite authors” referred to Moscow as Second Kyiv, citing Olena Rusyna (140). This phrase occurs only in a single text, the “History of Kazan” (*Kazanskaia istoriia*) which Keenan dates to the seventeenth century.²⁸ Plokyh articulates a conception of secular and religious cultural commonality which contradicts that upon which Keenan rejected the authenticity of some sixteenth century sources, although Plokyh endorses that rejection. By the same token Plokyh accepts Keenan’s dating of Prince Andrei

²⁶ Keenan’s interpretation is spurious. See Halperin, “Ivan IV and Kiev,” in *Rus’ Writ Large: Languages, Histories, Cultures. Essays Presented in Honor of Michael S. Flier on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Harvey Goldblatt and Nancy Shields Kollmann = *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 28, no. 1–4 (2006): 461–69.

²⁷ There is a typographical error on Plokyh, *Origin of the Slavic Nations*, 148, where Plokyh refers to an epistle as if it were written in 1579, when the footnote (n. 61) cites it as 1581. Plokyh, *Origins of the Slavic Nations*, 51 cites another Ivan epistle to Bathory dated to 1579. However, the matter is even more complicated. Keenan accepts the authenticity of the 1581 epistle and other Ivan correspondence with Lithuania published from the archives of the *Posol’skii prikaz* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The 1579 epistle, however, was found by Daniel Waugh in a seventeenth-century miscellany with the Ivan-Kurbinskii Correspondence. Waugh expressed doubts about its attribution to Ivan, which Keenan shares.

²⁸ Plokyh does not cite Keenan’s article on the *Kazanskaia istoriia*: Edward L. Keenan, “Coming to Grips with the *Kazanskaya Istoriya*: Some Observations on Old Answers and New Questions,” *Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the United States* 31–32 (1967): 143–83.

Kurbsky's *History of Ivan IV* to the 1670s (153 + n. 73), meaning Kurbsky did not write it. Yet Plokhy writes that in exile Kurbsky advised Prince Kostiantyn Ostrozky on religion (180). That Kurbsky did not write the *History* would not in and of itself disqualify him from serving as a religious consultant. However, Keenan's Kurbsky was illiterate, uncultured, and decidedly not religious. Keenan doubts that Kurbsky wrote anything or translated any of the works attributed to him. The Kurbsky debunked by Keenan would hardly qualify – morally, intellectually or religiously – to be an advisor on religion.

Keenan's skepticism about sources, which Plokhy claims to second, led Keenan to reject not only the authenticity of the works attributed to Ivan IV and Kurbskii but also to discard some of the most fundamental concepts generally applied to mid sixteenth-century Muscovite cultural history, specifically the ideological collaboration of church and state and the religious foundation of Muscovite perception of their identity, which Plokhy thoroughly endorses. This is the conundrum of any historian who misconstrues Keenan's as the only "critical" approach to sources, which must be followed *de rigueur*, but fails to see that Keenan's "critical" approach entails substantive conclusions far beyond Keenan's admittedly bombshell judgments about Ivan's and Kurbskii's literacy and the literary works attributed to them. This is why historians who would prefer to accept Keenan's judgment about the authenticity of the Kurbskii-Groznyi Correspondence but retain the authenticity of many other texts which would be suspect using Keenan's criteria and the validity of traditional conceptions of the role of religion in sixteenth-century Muscovy face an almost impossible impasse. Plokhy is, therefore, no more successful than specialists in Muscovite history in consistently subscribing to Keenan's judgments about sources, and just as unsuccessful in discriminating between Keenan's attitude toward sources and his "substantive" conclusions about Muscovite "history."

In Plokhy's opinion Keenan and Ostrowski presented convincing evidence that Muscovy was politically and culturally much more influenced by the Mongols and the steppe than by Kyiv. Keenan demonstrated that the court elite was much closer in culture and tradition to the Tatar khanates than Kyiv, with which Ostrowski generally agrees (140). Ostrowski, further developing some ideas of the Russian Eurasianists, made a persuasive case for Muscovite institutional borrowing from the Mongols (132). Muscovy was more a product of its Mongol experience than of the Kyivan past. Muscovy derived its political culture and social and economic practices from the Horde. The myth of "the Tatar Yoke" cannot be traced back earlier than last quarter of sixteenth century, becoming popular only in the seventeenth century. The Tatar Yoke constituted one of the two founding myths of Muscovy (133-35), the other

being the Kyivan inheritance. Muscovite reality, as opposed to ideology, was heavily Mongol. In Michael Khodarkovsky's epigrammatic phrase, because of Ivan's religious pragmatism in practice, Moscow was more a Second Sarai than a Third Rome or a New Jerusalem (150). "It is probably fair to assume that the policy of religious tolerance and pragmatism inherited by Muscovy from its former Tatar masters was at least partly responsible for the spectacular success of eastward Muscovite expansion in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" (150-51). Seventeenth-century official Muscovite Orthodox discourse followed Ivan IV in believing that Protestants were worse heretics than Catholics, but realpolitik governed Muscovy's search for allies against Catholic Poland-Lithuania (223). In the 1654 Pereiaslav Treaty Russia was following the rules of steppe diplomacy from the Golden Horde, which Muscovy had previously applied to its eastern neighbors, in which an oath meant eternal subjugation, violation of an oath treason (249).²⁹ Russia's Mongol inheritance long outlived Mongol rule.

It is easy to infer from Keenan's research on Muscovite relations with Kazan that he endorsed the view that the Mongols had a significant impact on the Muscovite state. Unfortunately such an inference would be false. Keenan not only never drew such a conclusion but explicitly rejected it. In articles which Plokhy cites Keenan attributed to Ivan III an attempt to turn Moscow into a "new Sarai" by collecting Chingissids and Chingissid regalia, but, Keenan continues, this steppe fad was brief and this endeavor was soon superseded by Italianate and later Safavid royal styles.³⁰ Keenan also wrote:

While it is probable, *though not beyond all doubt* [my italics-CJH], that the Muscovite court acquired several crucial techniques (communications, military organization, taxation) from the Tatars, and perhaps even dallied [NB] with certain oriental traditions of regal style, there is no evidence that the Muscovite political culture acquired anything in the realm of political abstraction or fundamental socio-political dynamics from their former mentors.³¹

It is Ostrowski who ascribes to the Mongols the degree of influence on Muscovy which Plokhy attributes to both Keenan and Ostrowski. Ostrowski rejects the Eurasianists' authoritarian version of Mongol *gosudarstvennost'* (concept of statehood) for a much more collegial model rooted in kinship and

²⁹ Note again that Plokhy refers to the Golden Horde, not the Qipchak Khanate.

³⁰ Edward L. Keenan, "Royal Russian Behavior. Style and Self-Image," in Edward Allworth, ed., *Ethnic Russia in the USSR. The Dilemma of Dominance* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1980), 7.

³¹ Edward L. Keenan, "Muscovite Political Folkways," *Russian Review* 45, no. 2 (April, 1986): 172.

consensus much like Kollmann's depiction of Muscovite political culture, which is quite fashionable in current Inner Asian scholarship. Ostrowski, moreover, declared that he was inspired not by Eurasianist ideas but by reading Robert Crummey's overview of the rise of Moscow.³² Ostrowski claims that the Church opposed those institutions which the Muscovite Court had borrowed from the Mongols. There is no evidence for this conclusion, especially since the Russian Orthodox Church defended the rights it received in charters (*iarlyki*) issued by the khans and wanted to retain its status as a tax-exempt *tarkhan*, an institution of Tatar derivation. Although Ostrowski's evaluation of Mongol influence on the Court are linked to the dichotomy of Court and Church proposed by Keenan, his assertions of Mongol institutional influence far exceed Keenan's qualified judgment. Ostrowski's case for fourteenth-century borrowing from the Horde and for the Horde origin of sixteenth-century institutions on a previously unheard-of scope are not convincing.³³ The conditional land grant was universal because no one needed a foreign model to think it up; in a state whose primary wealth was in land which needed mounted warriors, it was a no-brainer. While the Nogai Tatars attempted to foist some Horde concepts on to Ivan, such as his descent from Chinggis Khan and the title of "White Tsar" (*belyi tsar*), the Muscovites would have none of it, and merely indulged Nogai flattery without endorsing it.³⁴ Muscovy did not see itself as an heir of the Juchid ulus, did not try to reproduce the borders of the Juchid ulus, and did not imitate the geopolitical pretensions of the Juchid ulus.³⁵ Muscovy did not conceive of itself as a Second Sarai.³⁶ While some current historians believe that the significance of the

³² Donald Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross-Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier 1304-1547* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1998), xi-xii. I wish to express my appreciation to Dr. Ostrowski for calling my attention to this passage.

³³ Charles J. Halperin, "Muscovite Political Institutions in the Fourteenth Century," *Kritika* 1, no. 2 (Spring 2000), 237-57 and "Letter to the Editors," *ibid* 1, no. 4 (Fall, 2000), 831. The article but not the "Letter to the Editor" is reprinted in idem, *Russia and the Mongols*, Chapter 14, 219-35. The pagination in the Table of "Contents" is incorrect.

³⁴ Charles J. Halperin, "Ivan IV and Chinggis Khan," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 51, no. 4 (2003): 481-97, reprinted in idem, *Russia and the Mongols*, Chapter 17, 277-98. The pagination in the Table of "Contents" is incorrect.

³⁵ Charles J. Halperin, "Vymyshlennoe rodstvo. Moskoviia ne byla naslednitsei Zolotoi Ordy," *Rodina: Rossiiskii istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 12, 2003: 68-71, reprinted in idem, *Russia and the Mongols*, Chapter 18, 298-305. The pagination in the Table of "Contents" is incorrect.

³⁶ Indeed, since there had been two Sarais in the Juchid ulus, referred to by scholars as Old Sarai and New Sarai, or Sarai Batu and Sarai Berke, Moscow could not be the New Sarai or the Second Sarai. It would have had to be, ironically, of course, the Third Sarai. No Muscovite source referred to Moscow as a "New Sarai."

doctrine of Moscow-the Third Rome has been exaggerated, such is not the case with the notions of Russia as the “New Israel” or Moscow as the “New Jerusalem,” concepts which are alternatives to, not synonyms for, Moscow-the Third Rome. Muscovite restraint in imposing its religious prejudices on its Muslim population derived not from Horde precedent but political opportunism. Muscovy’s conquests down the Volga and into Siberia were a product not of religious toleration but of gunpowder. If in practice seventeenth-century Muscovites looked to Protestant countries, despite their “heresy,” as allies against Catholic Poland, that was exactly what Ivan IV had done. “Heresy” did not come up in Muscovite relations with Protestant England, Denmark or Lübeck. Ivan had no problem offering conquered Lutheran Livonian cities guarantees of their faith. Muscovite diplomacy had never applied steppe diplomatic practices to European countries. As for Pereiaslav, Muscovite imperial ideology on this score evolved out of domestic treatment of non-Muscovite Russian city-states and nobles who “betrayed” the ruler of Moscow. In the middle of the seventeenth century, given its ongoing westernization, Muscovy was extremely unlikely to have followed Mongol precedent.

Analogies between Muscovy and steppe and/or Muslim societies and polities, whether Tatar or Ottoman, must be drawn circumspectly. Muslim beliefs draw the dividing line between the State and religion radically differently than in a Christian polity. The society of the Juchid ulus was rooted in a clan-tribal society and pastoral nomadism, that of Muscovy in thoroughly European social classes and agriculture. Muscovite clans were really lineages which had nothing in common with Inner Asian clans. Kollmann, whose depiction of the importance of clans in Muscovite society Plokhyy cites approvingly, draws her social analogies to Muscovy from Europe, not the steppe. Despite significant Mongol influence and institutional borrowing unrelated to religion, Muscovy was not a steppe society or polity, Muscovite identity was not Mongol, and Mongol “cultural” influence is problematic in the extreme.

Muscovy utilized its steppe expertise, acquired under Mongol rule, to further its foreign policy goals toward steppe or Muslim peoples or countries, but Muscovy conceived of itself as a Orthodox Christian society. When needing support from Catholic or Protestant powers, Muscovy had no trouble rediscovering its common Christian affiliation in opposition to the forces of Islam. And Muscovy’s Christian identity cannot be separated from the Kyivan inheritance, which includes its literature, art and architecture, the major cultural media of the time.

The question of institutional continuity from Kyiv to Moscow is much more complicated and deserves more sophisticated treatment than a simple contrast of Kyivan and Muscovite practice. Sometimes it is impossible to

correlate Muscovite practice with either Kyivan or Mongol precedent. Nothing could be more important politically in a monarchy than dynastic succession. Muscovy's dynasty was of Kyivan origin, but Muscovy's typically European primogeniture aped neither Kyivan collateral succession nor Mongol tanistry. Plokhy observes that the notion of the Rus' Land was different in Kyiv compared to Muscovy, mostly on the issue of other patrimonies: in Kyivan Rus' the Rus' Land was the common patrimony of the Riurikid clan, in Muscovy it was the patrimony only of the Moscow Daniilovich (159). Of course this demonstrates the flexibility of the concept of the Rus' Land but it does not prove discontinuity between Kyiv and Moscow. Kyiv was medieval, Muscovy early modern; times change. Kyivan society still had functioning tribal units; their absence in Muscovy does not constitute Muscovite deviance from Kyivan Rus'. It is impossible to know what Kyiv would have looked like, had the Mongols not conquered Rus' (or Poland and Lithuania conquered the future Ukrainian lands). It is equally risky comparing sixteenth-century Muscovy to the thirteenth-century Mongol Empire or the fourteenth-century Juchid ulus, as if they would not have changed had they not disappeared.

The concept of the "Tatar Yoke" is a mystery. The earliest known reference to it in Slavonic comes from the 1674 third edition of the *Synopsis* usually attributed to Innokenty Guizel' of the Kyivan Caves Monastery, a work of East Slavic history which linked Kyiv and Moscow. The *Synopsis* was imported from Kyiv to Muscovy. Ostrowski discovered an earlier allusion but in Latin, *jugo Tartarica*, in Daniel Printz's account of his 1575 visit to Russia. To say the concept appears "in Russia" on the basis of Printz is to accept Ostrowski's unprovable assumption that Printz heard it in Russia rather than making it up. Given these two allusions and even allowing for the discovery of additional references in seventeenth-century Russian or foreign works, it would not seem prudent to speak of the "popularity" of the concept in seventeenth-century Russia. In the eighteenth century, courtesy of the enormous influence of the *Synopsis*, the concept gradually became the standard denotation of the Mongol period of East Slavic history.³⁷ Therefore, Plokhy's conclusion that the Tatar Yoke was a founding myth of Muscovite identity can be accepted only if the term is used loosely to refer to anti-Tatar ideology.

Plokhy finds it anomalous that Muscovy ignored the Rus' in Lithuanian armies during the Livonian War and did not try to take advantage of their

³⁷ Charles J. Halperin, "The Tatar Yoke and Tatar Oppression," *Russia Mediaevalis* 5, no.1 (1984): 20-39, reprinted in idem, *Russia and the Mongols*, Chapter 11, 168-81. The pagination in the Table of "Contents" is incorrect.

presence to disrupt the Polish-Lithuanian military. He attributes this in part to weak ethnic solidarity among the Rus'. The tsar did not try to protect Orthodoxy in the Commonwealth. Plokhy likens the sixteenth-century Muscovite attitude toward ancient Kyiv to the early modern Christians attitude toward Jews, who lauded Biblical Jews but persecuted contemporary Jews. Plokhy also admits that Ruthenian acceptance of the Union of Florence made Ruthenians less than kosher in Muscovite eyes. He finds a "tremendous difference in the attitude of official Muscovite discourse toward the medieval Kyivan princes and the early modern Rus' in Lithuania" (151-53). Plokhy is absolutely correct in defining this contrast.

However, that contrast makes perfect ideological sense. After the Historical Kyiv "passed on" its legitimacy to Moscow, Historical Kyiv no longer had any legitimacy, so Contemporary Kyiv was of no importance.³⁸ Within this paradigm, there was no reason for Muscovy to privilege current Ruthenians. Muscovite silence about ethnic affinity with the Ruthenians in diplomatic papers cannot be used to disprove Muscovite consciousness of that affinity. Muscovite emphasis on dynastic claims to Kyiv as the patrimony of the tsar merely demonstrated that the Muscovite Court thought that the strongest argument it could make in international diplomacy was dynastic, just as was the case with Kazan. Ivan IV's demands during his candidacy for the throne of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth made protection of his Orthodox faith and of the Orthodox in the Commonwealth a priority, so Plokhy's criticism of Ivan for neglecting Ruthenian Orthodoxy is not entirely warranted. Of course, Ivan did not really expect to get the job but even still, his choice of demands suggests what was on Muscovite and Ruthenian elite minds at the time. Given the subtle relationship in pre-modern times between ethnic and religious identity so ably elucidated by Plokhy, it should not occasion any surprise that Muscovy's perception of Ruthenian subjects of the Polish-Lithuanian state was rooted, in a confessional age, in religious confession, not ethnicity.

The interplay of Kyivan, Mongol, and extraneous elements in Muscovite institutions, culture and identity cannot be reduced to a single, simple formula. Muscovy borrowed political, military and administrative institutions from the Juchid ulus, it may have borrowed the two-headed eagle from the Habsburgs, it inherited religion, literature, painting, architecture and its dynasty from Kyivan Rus'. Ivan the Terrible could invoke his Kyivan inheritance and still

³⁸) Charles J. Halperin, "Kiev and Moscow: An Aspect of Early Muscovite Thought," *Russian History / Histoire russe* 7, no. 3 (1980): 312-21.

claim that he was German, via Augustus Caesar and Prus. Muscovy was Rus' ethnically and Orthodox religiously but Muslims, Protestants, Catholics and "pagans" could serve the Muscovite tsar. Such eclecticism suggests that Muscovy might have had multiple identities. The interplay of ethnicity, religion and politics in forging identity can only be explored, not resolved, and historians will continue to debate their relationship, including for sixteenth-century Muscovy. How one conceives sixteenth-century Muscovy, self-evidently, shapes interpretations of seventeenth-century Muscovy and Imperial Russia under Peter the Great.³⁹

Serhii Plokhy portrays the evolution of ethnic and cultural identities and identity projects among the pre-modern East Slavs within a rigorously historical context. Identities change and projects reflect the times in which they were composed. Self-evidently such identities and projects congenitally contained an historical element identifying ancestors, predecessors, models for imitation. Plokhy has presented the big picture. This article seeks only to suggest some ways to amend some details which contribute to that big picture. Such modifications are but a tribute to the inspiration Plokhy has provided.

³⁹ Two nit-picks and a post script on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century history: Although Plokhy cites Dunning's "short" history of the Time of Troubles, Chester Dunning, *A Short History of Russia's First Civil War: The Time of Troubles and the Founding of the Romanov Dynasty* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), rather than the "long" version, Dunning, *Russia's First Civil War: The Time of Troubles and the Founding of the Romanov Dynasty* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001) he still follows tradition in identifying the First False Dmitrii as Grigorii Otrep'ev despite Dunning's vehement denial of that identification (Plokhy, *Origin of the Slavic Nations*, 205-06). Plokhy does not cite Chester Dunning, "Who Was Tsar Dmitrii?" *Slavic Review* 60, no. 4 (2001): 705-29. Although Plokhy attributes the origin of early modern Pan-Slavism to the South Slavs (Plokhy, *Origin of the Slavic Nations* 262), he does not discuss the Croat Križanić. Plokhy's discussion of Peter the Great's Russian imperial concepts and his depiction of Siberia by Avvakum, tsars, emperors, and empresses (Plokhy, *Origin of the Slavic Nations*, 289 297-98) should now be informed by Valerie Kivelson, *Cartographies of Tsardom. The Land and Its Meanings in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), which no doubt appeared too late for Plokhy's consideration.