

Hryhoriy Pivtorak

**Ukrainians**

**Belarusians**

**Russians**

**THREE PEOPLES**  
**THREE PATHS**

HRYPHORIY PIVTORAK

**Ukrainians, Belarusians, Russians:  
Three Peoples, Three Paths**

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This study examines the historical stages of the formation of Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Russians as separate nations following the dissolution of Proto-Slavic linguistic unity. It analyzes national and cultural distinctions between Ukrainians and Russians and outlines the causes, methods, and chronology of historical falsifications conducted by Russian historians to align with the political interests of Russia's rulers.

Intended for a broad audience.

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## **HRYPHORIIY PIVTORAK**

### **UKRAINIANS, BELARUSIANS, RUSSIANS: THREE PEOPLES, THREE PATHS**

#### **HISTORICAL TRUTH AGAINST IMPERIAL ILLUSIONS**

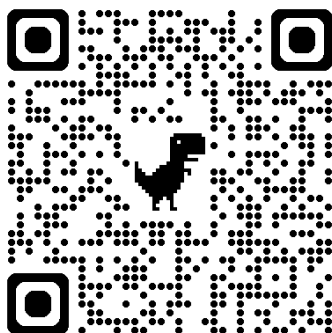
Since the reign of Ivan III (1462–1505), the Moscow Kremlin has been considered a symbol of the empire's "greatness" by its devoted servants. On this basis, history was altered. In short, according to a Soviet poet (with no irony), "Where the Kremlin lies, all lands rise".

Every civilised person and every cultured society can relate to the current issue of ethnogenesis and glottogenesis, i.e. the matter of the origin of a people and its language. This is because the people of every nation possess a unique genetic memory, a strong interest in their collective past, in the fate of their ancestors, in historical background and international relations, as well as in the origins and development of their mother tongue.

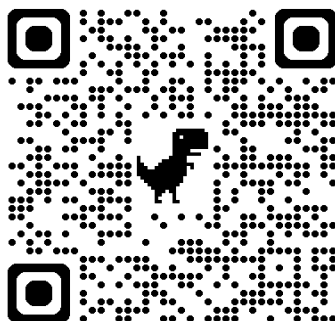
Ukrainians have attached great importance to all the above issues, both in the academic and political spheres. The latter has become particularly intense in recent times as the Russian political elite and the Church, led by their president, have persistently questioned the existence of Ukrainian ethnicity, history, language, culture and even the right to independence and nationhood. Putin is determined to revive the Russian Empire.

Unfortunately, his efforts are supported not only by the majority of Russian politicians but also by over 80% of Russian citizens (translator's reference:

<https://www.statista.com/chart/28436/support-for-war-in-ukraine-russians/>).



To achieve its irrational but intrusive and brooding aim, Russia is employing all available media, not only within its own borders but also in Ukraine, Europe, Asia and the Americas (translator's reference: <https://www.ukrainer.net/international-media-helps-russia/>).



Therefore, one of the main duties of Ukrainian scholars and journalists is to ensure that inch by inch the invalid facts, perversions of the truth and slanderous myths created by the Russians are countered with historically based evidence. The Ukrainian public is often disoriented. Therefore, the national mass media are to do their best to provide citizens with trustworthy information and prevent them from falling hook, line and sinker for the enemy's anti-Ukrainian and anti-state brainwashing.

It should be noted that the great-power imperial rhetoric of Putin and his supporters follows a fairly traditional and stable scenario. This is yet another attempt to turn back the wheel of history to the times of empires and colonies that are long gone and no longer relevant to anyone – except for the Russian elite and society. Whether it is a matter of ability or desire, they have still not eliminated the signs of the imperial remnant, expressed in clichés such as “missionary mission”, “Moscow, the third Rome”, “Pax Russica”, and in their domineering, arrogant and intrusive nature. It took centuries for these qualities to become deeply ingrained in their minds and to shape their worldview. As Alexander Solzhenitsyn said, “Russia has never had friends, solely enemies and sycophants”.

The Russian belief in being a majestic and almighty, blessed and all-powerful nation has its roots in the early 16th century when Vasili III ruled the Principality of Moscow (1505–1533). Then, during the reign of Ivan the Terrible (1533–1584), the Moscow governors' hunger for power became so insatiable that they began to appropriate not only the heritage of Kyivan Rus but also that of the Byzantine Empire. In addition, the Moscow tsar proclaimed himself the heir to the Byzantine emperors, which at first bewildered all European rulers of the time. These

claims, however, were no more than pure reverie and could not be taken seriously. As a result, strong and compelling arguments were needed to quell scepticism and make European politicians believe in the castles in the air built by the Moscow rulers.

This is what Peter I, the Tsar and reformer, had in mind when he tried to open the “window to Europe”. At the time, the Tsardom of Muscovy had no coherent written history. So, to create a noble but false version of history, in 1701 Peter I issued an order to raid archives and libraries on the territory of Ukraine and Belarus, collect all ancient written documents such as annals, chronographs, chronicles, ancient historical records, church documents, etc., and transfer them to Moscow and St. Petersburg. The task was accomplished, though it still didn’t result in the creation of history itself.

On 22 October 1721, Peter I renamed his state Tsardom of Moscow to the Russian Empire and its inhabitants Muscovites to Russians. As a result, it was a pressing issue to rationalize how the word “Russian” could be derived from the name of the Kyivan Rus Principality but in Russia, there was no person literate enough to document the history of the Russian Empire. Even though the newbie emperor contacted some educated Ukrainians several times, hoping that the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy’s alumni would help, his efforts were hopeless. The real reason for this failure remains unknown but it is clear that it had nothing to do with a lack of historical resources. It was rather that the intellectuals of the time did not wish the truth to be falsified. (Translator’s note: In the 9th-13th century, there was a medieval state of Rus (the “office” term Kyivan Rus is also used) with its center in Kyiv. Importantly, Rus is not Russia, and the inhabitants of Rus were not ancient “Russians” as it is presented not only by Russian propaganda, but also to a large extent by



Russian historiography. Russians speculate on the kinship of these terms and declare themselves sole descendants of the heritage of Rus, claiming that Russia has a “thousand-year history.”

But the key events in the history of Rus took place precisely on the territory of modern Ukraine, and the future Russia (Rostov-Suzdal, Vladimir-Suzdal principalities) was the periphery of Rus and actually independent from Kyiv.)



After Peter I, no one attempted to write a complete history of the Russian Empire for a while. Only Catherine II, who had been educated in Europe, managed to complete the mission brilliantly.

The reign of Catherine II, which lasted for 34 years (1762–1796), was marked by a lot of tragic events for Ukraine: the introduction of serfdom, the destruction of the Zaporozhian Host, the strengthening of national oppression, the assimilationist offensive against Ukrainian culture, and the total falsification of Ukrainian and Russian history.

Catherine II became interested in the history of her country only 20 years into her reign, after all the key state affairs had

been completed, and she had good reason to do so. In her opinion, the great state she ruled had to have great history. Of course, the self-confident queen could not be satisfied with the only textbook on the history of the Eastern Slavs at the time, the *Synopsis of Kyiv* (*Synopsis, or Brief Description of the Beginning of the Russian People*), which is attributed to the archimandrite of the Kyiv Cave Monastery, Innokenty Gizel. Although this *Synopsis*, first published in 1674, went through as many as 30 editions and was used as a school history textbook until the early 19th century, it actually did not present established historical facts but rather compiled popular ethnogenetic myths and legends from the ancient Slavs to the second half of the 17th century (for example, he calls Masokh, the sixth son of Japheth, grandson of Noah, etc., the ancestor of the Muscovites). However, the *Synopsis* also talks about much more profound subjects, such as the unity of Great and Little Rus, the unified “Orthodox-Russian people”, glorifies Kyiv as the oldest centre of all Rus, which implies that Kyivan Rus was the first stage of Russian statehood etc. All these statements in the *Synopsis* are not substantiated or supported by any historical documents.

Catherine II tried to comprehend the history of her state based on the written sources available to her: chronicles and other documents from Moscow's antiquity, as well as those that had been brought to the capitals under Peter the Great. In addition, she also ordered the removal of all old documents from the Urals and Siberia. The true Russian history shocked her because it seemed unattractive, rather clumsy, and very poor. In fact, it began only in the 12th century, with the princes Yuri Dolgorukiy and Andrey Bogolyubsky. The Empress was particularly struck by the fact that the powerful state of Kyivan

Rus, whose fame had echoed throughout the world for three centuries and whose princes were considered an honor to be related to the kings of France, Hungary, Sweden, and other countries, had nothing to do with Russia, i.e., Russia had nothing to do with it at all. Of course, such a story could not satisfy the narcissistic and power-hungry Empress and prompted her to create her own version of Russian history. She devoted 10 years of her life to this.

On December 4, 1783, Catherine II issued a decree ordering the creation of a *Commission for the Compilation of Notes on Ancient History, Mainly Russian* under the leadership of Count O. P. Shuvalov, who was loyal to her. This Commission consisted of about 10 eminent people, including the most famous historians of the time, I. Boltin, O. Musin-Pushkin, M. Bantysh-Kamensky, and others. Its task was to compile “useful notes on ancient history, mainly concerning Russia, making brief extracts from the oldest chronicles of Rus and foreign writers according to a well-known peculiar plan”. The notes were to be compiled “with common efforts”<sup>1</sup>.

The Commission worked for almost 9 years under the patronage of Catherine II and created a new basic framework for the history of the Russian Empire, linking its origins to Kyivan Rus. Contrary to the historical truth, the Commission proved the relation between Kyiv and Suzdal lands and thus asserted the right of Russians to the political and cultural heritage of Kyivan Rus, whose entire Slavic population was considered to be “one nation”. The Empress herself was directly involved in creating a new version of the history of the Russian Empire. She reviewed all the materials developed by the Commission, made corrections, as well as wrote her own text of the history, and personally compiled the genealogy of the princes of Rus.

It is quite clear that the new official but false version of Russian history was created contrary to the evidence of ancient manuscript sources, especially ancient chronicles. Therefore, on the instructions of Catherine II, these sources were revised: many old originals that had become redundant, undesirable, and even harmful were corrected, rewritten, classified, or criminally destroyed by the Commission. The most valuable ones were collected in a special closed fund, to which only a very limited number of researchers had access.

A new falsified version of Russian history was published in 1792 and became a model and even a mandatory standard for future historians of the 19th century. In particular, it formed the basis of M. Karamzin's *History of the Russian State* in 12 volumes in the first half of the 19th century, as well as S. Solovyov's fundamental *History of Russia from Ancient Times* in 29 volumes in the second half of the same century.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Professor of the Moscow University V. Kliuchevsky's lectures *The Course of Russian History* in 5 volumes, from ancient times to the reign of Catherine II, were published. His history was also written mainly from an official perspective, but he sees the beginning of Russia's history in the second half of the 12th century and rightly considers the first purely Russian prince to be the son of Yurii Dolgoruky, Andrey Bogolyubsky.

After the October Revolution of 1917, in the wake of the revolutionary ecstasy to destroy everything “old” and “bourgeois”, the tsarist version of the history of the Russian Empire was, among other things, rejected. The new official Soviet historical school of academician M. Pokrovsky in the 20s and 30s of the 20th century began Russian history from the

second half of the 12th century, i.e. from A. Boholiubsky. This was the way history was taught in Soviet secondary and higher schools. However, this process did not last long.

In the summer of 1934, *Remarks on the Outline of the History of the USSR Textbook* (“Замечания по поводу конспекта учебника по “Истории СССР””) was published under the signatures of J. Stalin, A. Zhdanov, and S. Kirov. These authors considered it unacceptable to consider the history of Great Russia as separate from the history of the “other peoples of the USSR”, meaning primarily Ukrainians and Belarusians, and thus historians were directly instructed to trace the origin of Russians to Kyivan Rus. Soviet historiography thus returned to the historical stereotypes of tsarist Russia. Since then, Soviet historiography has gradually developed “the belief that the past can be constructed according to one's taste and discretion, that historical truth is a directive from the authorities”<sup>2</sup>.

In 1938, at the request of Bolshevik ideologists, the Russian historian and Communist Party official Boris Volin published a monograph entitled *The Great Russian People* in order to raise the political and social prestige of the Russians. It was the first to formulate clearly and unambiguously the thesis of the missionary role of the Russian people, by which all the peoples of the USSR were to be guided and followed.

The Second World War somewhat dampened the chauvinist ambitions of the Moscow rulers, but they flared up with renewed vigour after the Soviet victory. Communist Party ideologists demanded historical works that would explain and develop the Kremlin's concept of the priority of Russians in the history of the Eastern Slavs, of the direct connection between the Moscow state and Kyivan Rus, and of Moscow as the heir to the political

and cultural heritage of ancient Kyiv. Suggestions in response to this request did not take long to pour in. School and university textbooks were also radically revised.

In 1948, the monograph *The Great Russian People* was published by the well-known public figure and popular historian of the time, A. Pankratova (“the first academic woman among Russian historians”). Soon after, a second, expanded edition of this work was published in 100,000 copies<sup>3</sup>. As stated in the annotation, this is a sketch of “the glorious history of the Russian people, which created a powerful centralised state, the most advanced science and culture, and military art; ... shows the leading role of the great Russian nation in the struggle to overthrow the landlord-capitalist system, in the creation of the Soviet state, in the defeat of fascism, in the struggle for the victory of communism, for peace and democracy”. Although it highlights Moscow's role “in collecting Russian lands”, there are no claims to the ancient Kyivan heritage, and Kyiv and Kyivan Rus are not mentioned at all. This gap was successfully filled by the Leningrad historian V. Mavrodin.

In 1946, V. Mavrodin's work *Ancient Rus (the Origin of the Russian People and the Formation of the Kyivan State)* was published, in which the author, without proper scientific argumentation, proclaimed that “Kyivan Rus is the initial stage in the development of all three fraternal Slavic peoples of Eastern Europe, having one ancestor – the Russian people of Kyivan times, the ancient Rus nation” (p. 309).

V. Mavrodin repeated the same thesis in his work: *The Formation of a Single Old Rus State* (“Образование единого древнерусского государства”, 1951), which clearly states that “during the times of the Kyivan state, the East Slavic world

developed into a single Russian people, or, more specifically, into a single Russian nation” (p. 215). This was considered a very positive fact. And if so, then the later disintegration of this “Russian nation” and the formation of three peoples instead – Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians – can be seen as an unfortunate historical zigzag, as a negative phenomenon caused by the evil will of the Mongol-Tatars, Lithuanians, and Poles who destroyed a common East Slavic state and a single ancient Rus people. Therefore, any unification of Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians in a single state should be accepted by them as the restoration of historical justice, and the desire for independence was regarded as an anti-national reactionary whim<sup>4</sup>.

V. Mavrodin's approach was approved by the CPSU Central Committee and officially proclaimed in the *Theses of the CPSU Central Committee on the 300th Anniversary of the Reunification of Ukraine with Russia* published in the *Pravda* newspaper on January 30, 1954. Failure to recognize the doctrine proposed by the Communist Party leaders was regarded as political immaturity, and its criticism was equated with a state crime. This situation lasted in fact until the collapse of the USSR in 1991 and is now being revived in an even more arrogant form in Russian imperialist chauvinist circles.

Of course, all these political tricks have nothing to do with the historical truth. And it is well-known, logical, simple, and understandable. Indeed, modern world Slavic studies have at their disposal reliable and proven methods of researching the distant past, which have yielded positive results, clearly recreating the social and linguistic history of the ancient Slavs and their descendants, including the modern East Slavic peoples, Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Russians.

According to scientific research, the Slavs appeared on the historical scene at the earliest at the end of the 3rd millennium BC, i.e. about 4,000 years ago. We know very little about their early history, as no reliable and unambiguously interpreted artifacts of their material and spiritual culture have survived from that time, but it is known that early years of the Common Era they inhabited a vast territory from the Vistula-Oder basin and the southern Baltic (in the west) to the Dniro (in the east) and from the Prypiat (in the north) to the Carpathians and the steppes (in the south). There were no Slavs outside this area. North of Prypiat and Desna lived the Baltic tribes, and in the Northeast, including the Oka and Volga basins, the Finnish-Hungarian tribes.

It is also important to note that the Slavs lived together for almost half of their 4,000-year history. Although for a long time the Slavic people consisted of many tribes living in different natural and climatic conditions and with certain differences in material and spiritual culture, they had much more in common than they did differences. They all spoke closely related dialects with many features in common, leading scholars to call them “Proto-Slavic” language.

The Common Slavic (i.e. Proto-Slavic) period lasted until the middle of the 1st millennium CE. However, even when it began, the Proto-Slavic ethnolinguistic area was outlined as having two subgroups – western and eastern, with their demarcation along the Western Bug. In the first centuries CE, the Slavs crossed the Prypiat River and began to settle in the area of modern Belarusian Polissia. Certain northward migrations also took place in the Desna basin.



In the 5th and 6th centuries CE, the Proto-Slavic ethno-linguistic community finally disintegrated, and separate Slavic ethnic groups and their languages began to form in both of its subgroups (in the western subgroup – Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Upper and Lower Sorbs, in the eastern subgroup – Ukrainians, Belorussians and, much later, Russians, as well as Serbs, Bulgarians, Macedonians, Slovenes, etc., who migrated southwards during the so-called Great Migration in the 6th century CE, settling the Balkan Peninsula and neighbouring countries).

Thus, the earliest ethnogenetic processes among the Eastern Slavs, beginning in the Proto-Slavic period, took place within the borders of modern Ukraine and the Polissian part of Belarus. This area was divided into two parts for a long time, from the 2nd to the 6th century CE: Polissia was inhabited by the Slavic tribes of the Sclavians, and the forest-steppe by the Antes. It was from these groups that the Ukrainians emerged as a separate ethnic group.

The formation of the Ukrainian ethnos from the middle of the 1st millennium CE is justified by the fact that since then there has been a cultural and historical continuity of development of Slavic tribes in this area (this is the one to be considered to be the determining indicator of the origin of any ethnic group with all its characteristic features)<sup>5</sup>. Due to this continuity, the genetic connection between the individual phases of development of the culture and language of a given ethnic organism is maintained throughout its life.

The formation of Ukrainians as a separate ethnic group from the middle of the 1st millennium correlates with the general patterns of the ethnogenetic process in Europe at that time.

According to researchers, it was at this time, that is, after the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476, when the socio-political situation in Europe stabilised, that “the continuous development of not only Ukrainians but also other peoples located in the zone of direct influence of the Roman Empire – the French, Spaniards, English, Germans, Romanians, Czechs, Poles, etc. can be traced”<sup>6</sup>.

Thus, the independent history of Ukrainians began simultaneously with the emergence and formation of other European ethnic groups. Along with the formation of an ethnic group, its language often appears, often before it has a written language and statehood. This was the case in the history of Ukrainians.

During the 6th to 8th centuries, as a result of the economic, cultural and linguistic consolidation of local Slavic tribes, their unions were formed, which in fact became separate feudal principalities. There were about 9 – 14 of them: Volhynians, Drevlians, Polans, Siverians, Dregoviches, Ulichs, Tiverts, White Croats, and others. As a result of their subsequent unification at the turn of the 8-9 centuries, a powerful state of Rus emerged, which 19th-century historians called “Kyivan Rus”.

In traditional Russian historiography, Kyivan Rus was considered the initial stage of Russian statehood, while more liberal Soviet ideologues proclaimed it a common state of “three fraternal peoples – Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians”. However, there is no factual basis for either of these doctrines. Initially, Kyivan Rus consisted only of Kyiv, Chernihiv and Pereyaslav lands, i.e. it did not extend beyond the proto-Ukrainian ethnolinguistic territory. The political, economic and

cultural centre of the state, Kyiv, was also located here. Thus, there is no doubt that Kyivan Rus was originally formed as an early proto-Ukrainian state. And in the 860s, it united only proto-Ukrainian tribes – Poles, Drevlians, southern Dregoviches, and the Chernihiv part of the northerners. It was only in the last quarter of the 9th century, almost a century after its formation, that the power of the Kyivan princes extended first to the Smolensk, and then to the Polotsk and Pskov Krivichs and to the Ilmen (or Novgorod) Slavs. It was only in the 10th, 11th and early 12th centuries that all the lands of the Eastern Slavs and many non-Slavic tribes were included. However, this entry was essentially formal, and all those lands remained almost independent of Kyiv. It was constantly opposed by the Polotsk principality, which existed during the 10th to 13th centuries. It was this principality that became the centre of formation of the Belarusian nation.

The peculiarity of the formation of the Belarusian ethnos was that the present-day Belarusian ethnolinguistic territory was originally inhabited not by Slavs, but by the Balts, from whom modern Lithuanians and Latvians descend. At the beginning of the modern era, the Slavs began to penetrate these lands and settled them, at first only from the southwest, and a little later – from the Northeast. The immediate ancestors of the Belarusians were the Dregoviches, partly the Radimichs and Krivichs.

The Dregoviches were formed during the migration of some Volhynians and Drevlians to the territories north of Pripjat. In the 8th and 9th centuries, they moved to the Baltic territories as far as the Upper Neman, and Ukrainian and Belarusian Polissia, whose northern border ran roughly along the line of the present-day cities of Novogrudok, Minsk, and Gomel, formed a single ethnolinguistic complex; and the northern Ukrainian and

southern Belarusian dialects experienced joint development until the mid-16th century, i.e. became one dialect group<sup>7</sup>.

The northeastern area of modern Belarus was inhabited by the Krivichs in the 8th and 9th centuries, whose ancestors came to the north of Eastern Europe from the southern coast of the Baltic Sea (the territory of modern Poland and partly northeastern Germany) by sea and land.

Thus, the Belarusian ethnos, as well as the language, were formed during the 8th and the first half of the 12th centuries as a result of the synthesis of the Krivichs in the Northeast and the Kyiv-Polissia (historically Sklavinsk) components in the southwest.

When the process of formation of Ukrainians and Belarusians in the second half of the 12th century was generally completed, the Russian nation was just emerging and beginning to enter the historical arena. It was formed far away from the Middle Dnipro Ukraine and was significantly influenced by local Finno-Ugric tribes.

The territory of modern European Russia in the 9th and first half of the 12th centuries was a distant and remote province of Kyivan Rus, separated from the Dnipro Ukraine by a huge array of swamps and impenetrable forests, which is why it was called the Zalissia (translator's note: The territories behind the forests) until the 15th century.

The peculiarly uncomfortable and harsh natural and geographical conditions of Zalissia have led to the fact that the region has been sparsely populated by local Finno-Ugric tribes for centuries. In the era of Kyivan Rus, Slavs gradually began to penetrate the region, albeit very slowly and reluctantly. There

were never any mass migrations of Slavs from the southern regions to Zalissia, because the primal farmers on the fertile lands of the Dnipro Ukraine had neither the need nor the desire to leave their homes and go to the unknown semi-wilderness, overcoming impenetrable thickets and swamps...

Only single men went to Zalissia – at first, seekers of adventure and luck in distant lands, but also various adventurers, criminals fleeing persecution, as well as warriors, hunters, merchants, monks, preachers, other church leaders who sought to spread Christianity among the local pagans, etc. They married local women, adopted their customs and everyday culture. As a result, over several centuries, a peculiar ethnic population was formed in Zalissia, consisting mainly of the slavized Finno-Ugric people. It became the basis of the Russian nation.

According to many ethnographers, Russians borrowed from Finnish traditional culture “pelmeni” (dumplings), “lapti” (bast shoes), “kosovorotka” (a men's shirt), “kokoshnik” (a women's headdress), “sarafan” (a women's sundress), “matryoshka” (a toy, a matryoshka doll), “bania” (a bathhouse), and “kosolapyi Mishka” (a clubfoot Bear, a fairy tale character), that are still popular today. The bear was considered a sacred animal by the Finns and was an ethnic symbol of Russians until it was replaced by the Greek double-headed eagle in the 15th century. This happened after the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 and the marriage of Prince Ivan III of Moscow to the niece of the last Byzantine emperor, Sophia Palaiologina. Her dowry included an image of the Byzantine double-headed eagle, which has since become the national emblem of the Moscow state.

All these events took place later, but before that, the settlements scattered in the forests and marshes of the Zalissia

region retained the ethnographic characteristics of the local Finno-Ugric tribes, primarily the Muroms, Meri and Vesi. The regional consolidation of various tribes took place in this area.

In the 10th century, the Rostov-Suzdal principality emerged in the interfluvium of the Oka and Volga rivers. Its political centres were first Rostov, from the beginning of the 12th century – Suzdal, and from the second half of the 12th century – Vladimir-on-the-Klyazma.

The political weight and significance of the Rostov-Suzdal land grew rapidly during the reign of Yuri Dolgorukiy, the youngest son of Volodymyr Monomakh and the alleged founder of Moscow. He married a Cuman princess and thereby initiated a strong and long-lasting anti-Ukrainian alliance between the Vladimir-Suzdal princes and the Cumans. Nevertheless, Yuri Dolgorukiy did not break ties with Kyiv and even tried to take the Kyivan throne. Instead, his son Andrey, nicknamed Bogolyubsky (he built a castle in the village of Bogolyubovo), pursued a completely different policy. He grew up in the Suzdal region and was raised by a Cuman woman. Ukraine was alien to him. As the prominent Russian historian V.O. Klyuchevsky noted, “in the person of Prince Andrey, a Great Russian appeared on the historical stage for the first time, and this performance cannot be considered successful”<sup>8</sup>. He became a fierce enemy of Kyiv.

In 1169, Andrey Bogolyubsky, leading a large army of 11 northern princes, captured Kyiv and brutally handed the city over to his army. The Suzdalers destroyed the people of Kyiv with particular hatred and fury. It was no longer a traditional internecine struggle, but an inter-ethnic feud.

In the early 13th century, the Vladimir-Suzdal principality broke up into a number of fiefdoms: Rostov, Yaroslavl, Pereyaslav, Moscow, etc. In 1238, the Tatar-Mongols attacked the Vladimir-Suzdal region and conquered Zalisia.

From the middle of the 13th century, the Grand Duchy of Moscow began to gain strength in the Vladimir-Suzdal region and, with the consent and active support of the Tatar-Mongol khans, to annex neighbouring lands. It became the centre of the formation of the Russian nation.

Historians often say that Moscow princes, beginning with Ivan I Kalita (1325–1340), skillfully used the power of the Tatar-Mongol khans to their advantage and achieved great success. This is true, although the situation was actually paradoxical: The Moscow princes pursued an openly anti-Golden Horde policy, but skilfully concealed it, swore allegiance and loyalty to the khans, appeased them in every possible way, and received support, titles and principalities, positions and generous gifts in return. Various methods were used: Moscow's vassal princes willingly intermarried with Tatar nobles, considering it an honour to marry khan's relatives or noble maidens from the Horde.<sup>9</sup> In their relations with the Horde and with their neighbours, they acted according to the principle that any means were acceptable to achieve their goals, and therefore in their politics they often resorted to lies or half-truths, hypocrisy, tricks, unscrupulousness, slander, intrigue, duplicity, bribery, blackmail, fabrications, slander, treason, etc. The postulate “the end justifies the means” has been a common and routine principle of all subsequent generations of Russian politicians up to the present day.

During the 14th and 15th centuries, the major neighbouring lands were united around Moscow, resulting in the formation of the centralised Moscow state. In 1480 Moscow was finally freed from the Tatar-Mongol yoke and Grand Duke Ivan III Vasilyevich (1462–1505) became the ruler of a single centralised state. However, the prolonged Tatar-Mongol enslavement not only left a deep mark on the minds of the people, but also influenced all aspects of the social and political life of the young Russian state and, to a certain extent, the mentality of the Russian people. It is no coincidence that N. Berdyaev defined Russia as a “Christianised Tatar kingdom”, and the Russian linguist, philosopher and publicist N. Trubetzkoy noted that “the Moscow state was created thanks to the oppression of the Tatars. The Russian tsar was the heir to the Mongol khan. The overthrow of Tatar oppression consisted in the replacement of the Tatar Khan by an Orthodox Tsar and the transfer of the Khan's seat to Moscow”<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, the Tatar perception of the supreme ruler as an infallible benefactor, to whom everything is allowed and everything is forgiven, is so deeply and firmly embedded in the Russian mentality that they live with it to this day.

The famous Ukrainian historian Ya. Dashkevych believes that “the psychology of a Russian man was strongly influenced by the Tatar-Mongol instinct of a conqueror, a despot whose main goal is world domination. Thus, in the 16th century, a type of conqueror man was formed, terrible in its ignorance, rage and cruelty. These people did not need European culture and writing, they were indifferent to such categories as morality, honesty, shame, truthfulness, human dignity, historical memory, etc.”<sup>11</sup>.



From all the above-mentioned one can draw a logical conclusion: Russians are not brothers to Ukrainians and they have never been. Our histories have evolved in different ways from the very beginning. Russians are related to Kyivan Rus only because their lands for some time were semi-formally part of this state, and future Russians adopted the Christian culture of Kyivan Rus with many Ukrainian influences, since the creator of the Kyivan state was Ukrainian and to a certain extent Belarusian ethnic groups. And the Russians were not the creators of this culture, but consumers in its ready-made form. The famous historian L. Zalizniak is absolutely right when he states that “Moscow's rights to the historical and cultural heritage of princely Kyiv are no greater or less than the rights of Madrid, Lisbon, Paris or Bucharest to the history and culture of Latin Rome”<sup>12</sup>.

The culture of Kyivan Rus, which the Russians adopted, naturally became an important basis for the material and spiritual culture of the Russian people. However, if the Ukrainians were direct descendants of the people of Kyiv, Galych, Chernihiv, Pereyaslav and other proto-Ukrainian territories, the Russian ethnic characteristics were a product of their self-development in the conditions of their own ethnic territory located far beyond the borders of ancient Rus<sup>13</sup>.

The difference between Ukrainians and Russians at all stages of their history was also recognized by some Russian figures, even those who were critical of Ukrainian culture, such as the most famous and authoritative Russian critic of the 19th century V. Belinsky. He recognized that in the 12th century, the Ukrainians were already a separate people, noticeably different from the Russians, which was evidenced by *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*. V. Belinsky thinks that “this work is clearly

contemporary to the event it describes and bears the imprint of the poetic and human spirit of southern Rus (translator's note: Ukraine), which had not yet known the barbaric yoke of the Tatar region, the alien rudeness and savagery of northern Rus (translator's note: Russia)... What differentiates it from others, is the nobility of tone and language... There is something soft in its language, reminiscent of the current Malorussian dialect (translator's note: That is how Russians called the Ukrainian language)... But to the greatest extent the southern Rus origin of *The Tale* is expressed in people's everyday life described in it. There is something noble and human in the mutual relations of the characters of this poem... But particularly striking are the relationships between men and women in it... The part called *Yaroslavna's Crying* oozes with deep feelings, expressed in images that are equally simple, graceful, noble and poetic. She is not a wife who, after the death of her husband, was left a bitter orphan, without a place to stay and means to exist, and who is disappointed that there is no one else to feed and beat her: She is a tender lover, whose loving soul yearns for her beloved... All this, we repeat, is characteristic of southern Rus, where even now there is still so much humanity and nobility in family life. Where the relationships between men and women are based on love, and a woman enjoys the rights of her gender. And all this is diametrically opposed to northern Rus regions, where family relationships are wild and rude and the woman is treated as a kind of cattle; where love is a completely foreign matter in marriages. Compare the life of Malorussian (translator's note: That is how Russians called Ukrainian) men with the life of Russian men, townspeople, merchants and, to some extent, other classes, and you will realize the fairness of our conclusion about the southern origin of *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*<sup>14</sup>.

The language of *The Tale* is also convincing evidence of its Ukrainian origin. It widely presents such characteristic features of the Ukrainian language as *pleophony*: **боронь** [boron'], **ворота** [vorota], **забороло** [zaborolo], **полонени** [poloneni], **хороброе** [khorobroe], etc.; forms of the dative case of masculine nouns ending on *-ови* [ovi], *-єви* [evi]: **Дунаєви** [Dunaevi], **Игорєви** [Igorevi], **Романови** [Romanovi], **королеви** [korolevi]; vocative case of nouns: **Бояне** [Boyane], **дружино** [druzhyno], **Игорю** [Igoriu], **княже** [knyazhe], **Всеволоде** [Vsevolode], **господине** [hospodyne]; forms of verbs in the present tense with a soft ending *-ть* [-t']: **велить** [velyt'], **плачеть** [plachet'], **ржуть** [rzut'], as well as rich vocabulary of local origin, folk phraseology.

The general tone of *The Tale*, its poetic and linguistic features indicate that the anonymous author of this work was a representative of an already well-formed ethnic group with its own mentality, language and certain traditions of oral poetic creativity.

In the course of time, the difference between Ukrainians and Russians only increased. Even foreigners noticed it. For example, Paul of Aleppo, a Syrian archdeacon, writer and traveler from the city of Aleppo (Haleb), while travelling with his father Melkite Patriarch of Antioch to Moscow through Ukraine in 1654, noted: "From this town [Rashkiv on the Dnister River] and throughout the Ruthenian land (translator's note: Ruthenia is the name of Ukraine in historical sources in Latin), that is to say, the land of the Cossacks, we noticed a beautiful feature that surprised us very much: all but a few of them, even the majority of their women and daughters, can read and know the order of church services and church songs. Moreover, the priests teach the orphans and don't let them wander the streets in

ignorance... We have noticed a righteousness, holiness and devotion to God in these people that is truly amazing... But nothing surprised us more than the beauty of the little boys and their singing, coming from the heart, in harmony with the older voices... The nuns can read, they know philosophy, logic and they love art... We were amazed by the clear voices and the singing, especially the performances of the girls, both adults and minors”<sup>15</sup>.

After spending two years in a backward and illiterate Moscow and returning home again via Ukraine, Paul of Aleppo had the opportunity to compare the two countries: “Tonight we slept by the river, happy and calm. Because from the moment we first saw the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra sparkling with its baths from afar, and as soon as the sweet fragrance of these blooming lands reached us, our souls trembled with joy and gladness, our hearts opened and we felt so much gratitude to the Lord. For two long years in Moscow, a real burden lay on our hearts, and our minds seemed to be in vise, because in that country no one can feel even a little free and content, except those who were born and grew up there. And all the others, like us, even if we became the rulers of the whole country, will never get rid of fear and anxiety... But the land of the Cossacks was like our own, and the people who lived there were our good friends and noble men, just like us. Oh, what a blessed land it is! What a blessed nation!... ”<sup>16</sup>.

In the middle of the 19th century this great difference between Russians and Ukrainians was noticed by the already mentioned V. Belinsky. His thoughts were based on personal observations. He was undoubtedly a Russian patriot, but he allowed himself to make harsh, essentially anti-Russian statements, sometimes not choosing his words. Thus, on 15 June

1846, while on holiday in Ukraine for medical treatment, he wrote to his wife: “30 versts (translator’s note: Somewhat more than 30 km) from Kharkiv, I saw Malorussia (translator’s note: This is how Russians called Ukraine), although still mixed with dirty moskal (translator’s note: Moskal is a designation used for the residents of the Grand Duchy of Moscow from the 12th to the 15th centuries) ways of life. The khokhol (translator’s note: This is how Russians call Ukrainians with disdain) huts look like farmers' houses – the cleanliness and beauty are indescribable. Imagine that Malorussian (translator’s note: This is how Russians call Ukrainian with disdain) borscht is nothing else than a green soup (only with chicken or lamb and seasoned with lard). They cook this soup very tasty and remarkably clean. And these are peasants! They have different faces, they look at you differently. The children are very cute. You can't have a look at Russian kids – those are worse and uglier than pigs”<sup>17</sup>.

The Russian writer and publicist Ivan Bunin first visited Ukraine as a tourist in 1889. He was 18 years old and described his impressions in the autobiographical essay *Cossack Procession*: “I liked the khokhols (translator’s note: This is how Russians call Ukrainians with disdain) at first sight. I immediately noticed the sharp difference between a Russian peasant and a khokhol. Our people are mostly exhausted, in torn zipun (medieval Russian type of peasant upper garment), bast shoes “lapti” and footcloths, with thin faces and shaggy heads. But khokhols make a good impression: They are tall, healthy and strong, they look at you calmly and gently, they are dressed in clean, new clothes”<sup>18</sup>.

The realities of modern life show that even today there are huge differences between Russian and Ukrainian social norms, priorities in life, moral values, traditions, habits and, finally,

mentality in general. Thus, when Russian politicians claim that Russians and Ukrainians are one people with a common language and culture, they are either completely ignorant of history and ethnology, or they are deliberately falsifying obvious historical facts in order to satisfy their greed for power and their imperial ambitions.

<sup>1</sup> Klyuchevsky, V. O. (1990). *Istoricheskie portrety [Historical Portraits]*. Moscow, (p. 564).

<sup>2</sup> Braichevsky, M. Pratsiyi nezalezhno vid perspektyv publikatsiyi [*Work Independently of Publication Prospects*] Chronicle 2000, (#17-18, p. 369).

<sup>3</sup> Pankratova, A. (1952). *Velikiy russkiy narod [The Great Russian People]*. Moscow, 260 pages.

<sup>4</sup> *For the history of the emergence of the concept of the Old Russian nationality, see the work: Zalyzniak, L. (2004). Vid sklavyvnyv do ukrayinskoyi natziyi [From the Sclaveni to the Ukrainian Nation]*. 2nd ed., revised and supplemented, Kyiv (pp. 85-94).

<sup>5</sup> Zalyzniak, L. (2004). *Vid sklavyvnyv do ukrayinskoyi natziyi [From the Sclaveni to the Ukrainian Nation]*, (pp. 59-60).

<sup>6</sup> Zalyzniak, L. (2004). *Vid sklavyvnyv do ukrayinskoyi natziyi [From the Sclaveni to the Ukrainian Nation]*, (p. 58).

<sup>7</sup> Sherekh Y. (Shevelov Y.). (2010). *Prablemy pharmavannya belaruskai movy [Problems of the Belarusian language formation]*. Arche. (#6. pp. 31, 32).

<sup>8</sup> Klyuchevsky, V. O. (1956). *Kurs russkoi istorii [A Course in Russian History]*. Vol. I. Moscow (p. 324).

<sup>9</sup> Novoseltsev A. I. (1989). *Khristianstvo, islam i iudaizm v stranakh Vostochnoy Yevropy i Kavkaza v srednie veka [Christianity, Islam and Judaism in the countries of Eastern*

*Europe and the Caucasus in the Middle Ages*]. Voprosy Istorii. (# 9. p. 31).

<sup>10</sup> Trubetzkoy N. C. (1927). *To the problem of Russian self-consciousness*. [B.m.].( P. 49).

<sup>11</sup> Dashkevych Ya. (2011). *Yak Moskovyiya pryvlasnyla istoriyu Kyivskoyi Rusi* [How Muscovy appropriated the history of Kyivan Rus]. Ya. Dashkevych. Teach the truth with untruthful lips. Kyiv (pp. 83-84).

<sup>12</sup> Zalyzniak, L. (2004). *Vid sklavyntiv do ukrayinskoyi natziyi* [From the Slaveni to the Ukrainian Nation], (p. 121).

<sup>13</sup> Zalyzniak, L. (2004). *Vid sklavyntiv do ukrayinskoyi natziyi* [From the Slaveni to the Ukrainian Nation], (p. 143).

<sup>14</sup> Belinsky, V. G. (1954). *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy* [Complete Works]. Vol. V. Moscow (pp. 332, 348-349).

<sup>15</sup> *Puteshestvie Antiokhiyskogo patriarkha Makariya v Rossiyu v polovine XVII veka, opisannoe ego synom, arkhidiakonom Pavlom Aleppskim* [The Travels of Macarius, Patriarch of Antioch, to Russia in the Middle of the 17th Century, Described by his Son, Archdeacon Paul] (1897). Vol. 2. Moscow (pp. 2, 15, 94).

<sup>16</sup> *Puteshestvie Antiokhiyskogo patriarkha Makariya v Rossiyu v polovine XVII veka, opisannoe ego synom, arkhidiakonom Pavlom Aleppskim* [The Travels of Macarius, Patriarch of Antioch, to Russia in the Middle of the 17th Century, Described by his Son, Archdeacon Paul]. (1898). Vol. 4. Moscow (p. 185).

<sup>17</sup> Belinsky, V. G. (1958). *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy* [Complete Works]. Vol. XII. Letters 1844-1848 (p. 288).

<sup>18</sup> Bunin, I. A. (1965). *Kazatskim Khodom* [“By Cossack March”] in *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy* [Complete Works]: Vol. II. 1890–1909. Moscow (p. 427).

## About the Author

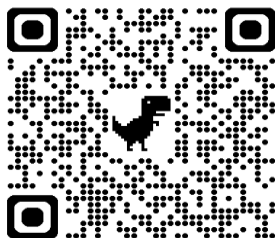
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Utilizing an interdisciplinary approach, he has developed a comprehensive theory of the origins of the Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Russian languages. This theory draws upon a range of sources, including historical phonology, diachronic dialectology, and ancient written records, as well as extralinguistic sources such as historical, archaeological, anthropological, and folkloric studies.

Hryhoriy Pivtorak is also the co-author and editor of several monumental dictionaries.

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