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The Monumental Commemoration of St. Volodymyr / St. Vladimir in Ukraine, Russia, and Beyond

The Nationalization of the Past, the Orthodox Church, and 'Monumental Propaganda' Before and After the Annexation of Crimea

Introduction

During the post-Soviet period an increasing proliferation of monuments to the princes of Kyïvan Rus' and to Orthodox saints can be seen in Ukraine and in Russia. The political salience of such a distant past is not a surprise as both countries lay claim to the historical heritage of Kyïvan Rus', which serves for them as a national myth of origin. The idea of the historical continuity of Russian statehood from Kyïvan Rus' to Muscovy to the Russian Empire with St. Petersburg as its capital was established in Russian historiography in the 19th century. *Malorosy* (Little Russians), who populated the territories of the former Kyïvan Rus', were considered no more than a regional branch of the Russian people with some cultural and linguistic peculiarities. In Ukraine, the 'national awakening' of the late 19th century brought about public interest in Cossack history and established its direct continuity from Kyïvan Rus'. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Ukrainian historian Mykhaĭlo Hrushevs'kyĭ challenged Russian imperial discourse by claiming Kyïvan Rus' as the first Ukrainian state (*Ukraïna-Rus'*).[1] In Soviet historiography, Kyïvan Rus' was considered the 'common cradle' of the three East Slavic peoples –

[1] See for example Andreas Kappeler, *Ungleiche Brüder: Russen und Ukrainer vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (München: C.H. Beck, 2017), 26–34.

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Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians – eventually re-united in one state as Soviet republics.

The collapse of the Soviet Union gave way to the emergence of Ukraine and Russia as two independent states which embarked on the nationalization of history as a pillar of nation-building. Russia's post-imperial identity has been grounded in widely accepted pre-Soviet and Soviet historical narratives of Kyïvan Rus' as the origin of the Russian state. In Ukraine, which in many aspects presents itself as a post-colonial nation, Mykhaĭlo Hrushevs'kyĭ's historiography considering Kyïvan Rus' as the precursor to the Ukrainian state became foundational in the process of nation-building. With the revival of the Orthodox Church, the Christianization of Kyïvan Rus' in 988 (its 1000th anniversary was officially celebrated in the USSR at the peak of Perestroika) came to the fore as a key historical event which had determined the historical destiny of both Russia and Ukraine. This narrative has been actively supported by the newly empowered Orthodox Church. All this explains the ambivalent role of Kyïvan Rus' heritage in the current Ukrainian–Russian culture wars as it provides resources for narratives of Slavic unity and a common Orthodox civilization as well as of Ukraine's distinct historical path and national identity.

Through all the interpretations of the history of Kyïvan Rus', the Kyïvan prince Volodymyr (in Russian Vladimir) holds a central position. Prince Volodymyr the Great, in full Volodymyr Sviatoslavych (c. 960–1015), is celebrated as the first Christian ruler of the Kyïvan state. Canonized in the 13th century, he is often referred to as 'the Holy, Equal to the Apostles, Grand Prince of Kyïv'.

Especially against the background of the current Russian–Ukrainian conflict, St. Volodymyr / St. Vladimir[2] serves as a symbol employed by various political actors for re-drawing (or eliminating) the boundaries between the Ukrainian and Russian nations. Extremely fluid and ambivalent, this symbol has been claimed, re-imagined, and re-interpreted in multiple political contexts. Newly built monuments to St. Vladimir in Russia refer to the origins of a 'thousand-year-old' Russian statehood and of Russian Orthodox civilization. The latter goes beyond the borders of the Russian Federation and embraces all East Slavic peoples. In contemporary Russian discourse this idea takes the form of the 'Russian World' (*Russkiĭ mir*) which construes Russians and Ukrainians as a single people

[2] In the following, I will use both the Ukrainian and the Russian transliteration of the name depending on context.

(*odin narod*). A similar interpretation of the figure of Prince Vladimir has also been reproduced in Ukraine by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) and by pro-Russian organizations. At the same time, some Ukrainian monuments to Prince Volodymyr (both in the country and especially abroad) symbolize exclusive claims to Kyïvan Rus' as the first antecedent of Ukrainian statehood and sometimes even of Ukraine's 'European Choice'. To add to the complexity of St. Volodymyr / St. Vladimir as a symbol, in many cases monuments dedicated to him are local projects, aimed at the re-invention and consolidation of regional / local identities in the first place.

This article addresses some examples of the monumental commemoration of St. Vladimir / St. Volodymyr.[3] It looks at the mnemonic actors involved in these projects on the national and the local level, at the political debates surrounding the construction of the monuments, and at the uses of these monuments and their appropriation by local communities. The article seeks to answer the following questions: what does the proliferation of St. Vladimir monuments tell us about nation-building in Ukraine and Russia and the nature of the culture wars between the two countries? What does it say about the relationship of the Orthodox Church(es) to the post-Soviet state? Who or what are the mnemonic actors who initiate and support these commemorative projects?

1. Understanding the New Monumental Cult of St. Vladimir / St. Volodymyr

Monuments are attracting growing interest from different academic disciplines, including history, social anthropology, and political science. In the following, I underline some approaches relevant to the questions addressed in this article.

[3] According to my calculations there are more than thirty monuments to St. Vladimir/ St. Volodymyr in Russia, Ukraine, and other parts of the world, and the number is growing every year. Due to the lack of space, it was not possible to address all existing monuments in this chapter. Among those which were omitted are, for example, monuments in Novocheboksarsk (2003), Kemerovo (2015), and Samara (2018), all in Russia.

1.1. Re-Bordering Russia and Ukraine

First, monuments connect myths and narratives with territory and endow localities with historical meaning. In this way, monuments contribute to what the political geographer Robert Kaiser called the "production of homelands"[4] and the historian Antony Smith conceptualized as the "territorialization of memory".[5] As symbolic markers of collective identities, monuments do not just memorialize historical events and personalities: often, they help lay territorial and geopolitical claims. Especially in times of crisis and rapid change they serve as instruments of the re-bordering of political communities. With political boundaries moving, new monuments mushroom, celebrating territorial gains or coping with a loss of territory. Sometimes, however, monumental commemoration can be viewed as preceding – or even signalling – forthcoming changes in political geography. It is difficult to resist seeing in this way the erection of the St. Vladimir monument (by the well-known Russian nationalist sculptor Viacheslav Klykov) in Sevastopol' back in 1993.

In their report *Ukraine in Russian Historical Discourse: Problems of Research and Interpretation*, the Ukrainian historians Georgiy Kasianov, Valeriĭ Smoliĭ, and Oleksiĭ Tolochko wrote that while the Russian historical narrative which includes Kyïvan Rus' as part of its medieval history was not really challenged by the Ukrainian historical '*Reconquista*', the collapse of the Soviet Union still created a serious problem for Russia:

> "Yet contemporary geographic and political realities cannot be ignored. Kyïv and other centres of Ancient Rus', including those which are part of Russian national mythology (for example, the whole geography of the *Tale of Igor's Campaign*) for the first time in modern history found themselves beyond the state borders of Russia. From the perspective of state commemorative practices – the celebration of anniversaries, visits to historical and memorial places, the construction of monuments and memorial signs – this situation is quite uncomfortable. In fact, Russia has lost the possibility of defining the 'sites of memory' related to its early history and origins of statehood according to its own vision and ideology. Russian officials can only take part in the commemorative activities of the Ukrainian state as guests, which creates a quite ambivalent situation: are they attending their own celebration or celebrating foreign

[4] Robert J. Kaiser, 'Homeland Making and the Territorialization of National Identity', in *Ethnonationalism in the Contemporary World: Walker Connor and the Study of Nationalism*, ed. Daniele Conversi (London: Routledge, 2002), 229–47.

[5] Antony D. Smith, 'Culture, Community and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism', *International Affairs* 72, 3 (1996): 445–58.

> history? Besides, 'common celebrations' require the adjustment of ideological gestures and their meanings in such a sensitive area as historical memory, something the Russian authorities try to avoid. In this way Russia has faced the situation of losing control over its 'territory of memory' but is not ready to accept its transfiguration by Ukraine."[6]

In an attempt to adjust Russia's "territory of memory" to its current state borders some new projects emerged in the 2000s, mostly related to Ladoga (now Staraia Ladoga in Leningrad Oblast') and Velikiĭ Novgorod. In 2002, Putin signed a decree ordering the celebration of the 1250th anniversary of Ladoga; in 2003 he visited Ladoga as part of the festivities and inaugurated a memorial related to the event. During 2003–4, Ladoga was celebrated in the media and in official speeches as the 'de facto first capital of the Russian state'. Another campaign under President Medvedev which ended with the celebration of the 1150th anniversary of Russian statehood focused on Velikiĭ Novgorod, one of the historical centres of Kyïvan Rus'.

In this context, the proliferation of monumental statues to Vladimir and other Kyïvan princes on the territory of the Russian Federation can be seen as an attempt to adjust the imaginary memoryscape of Kyïvan Rus' to Russia's new post-Soviet borders. In 2014, however, the annexation of Crimea signified a new, opposite tendency, i.e. the regaining Russia's former territories justified by arguments relating to historical memory: the state borders have now been adjusted to include 'lost' elements of the Russian memoryscape. So the monumental commemoration of St. Vladimir in Russia during the post-Soviet period has been a way of coping with territorial losses – and at the same time, from 2014 on, an instrument for the legitimization of a territorial gain (Crimea).

This territorial aspect is less obvious in Ukraine, whose current political geography largely overlaps with the memoryscape of Kyïvan Rus' and for whom the presence of the 'original' St. Volodymyr in Kyïv makes additional symbolic claims unnecessary. This reason, along with limited economic resources and different priorities on the part of key mnemonic actors, makes 'Vladimiromania' less pronounced in Ukraine than in Russia. In the Ukrainian context, Volodymyr appears a more ambivalent symbol as its monuments signify a belonging to the Russian / Slavic cultural space in some cases (e.g. in Sevastopol') and to Ukrainian (albeit

[6] Georgiy Kasianov, Valeriĭ Smoliĭ, and Oleksiĭ Tolochko, *Ukraïna v rosiĭs'komu istorychnomu dyskursi: problemy doslidzhennia ta interpretatsiĭ* (Kyïv: Natsional'na Akademiia Nauk Ukraïny, Instytut Istoriĭ Ukraïny, 2013), 110–11.

not anti-Russian) identity in others (e.g. the recently erected St. Volodymyr monument in Kryvyĭ Rih).

1.2. Local Memory Politics, Diverse Mnemonic Actors

The second influential approach in memory studies sees monuments as political projects deeply rooted in local politics and society. In the words of Jay Winter, however sacred the task of commemoration, it has been always about "the chords of local loyalties, petty intrigues, favouritism, apathy and indifference" and "about contracts, payments and profits".[7] In other words it is "a business shaped by the character of the community which undertook it".[8] From this perspective, political fights, negotiations, and compromises around the construction of new monuments reveal such persistent vices of post-Soviet politics as a lack of public accountability, clientelism, and corruption. Monumental commemoration projects are often sites of public debate and political battles around such issues as location, funding, and ideological interpretation; they involve multiple actors and reveal different visions not so much of the past as of the present.

Unlike some other historical personalities, St. Volodymyr / St. Vladimir is not really a politically controversial symbol: he does not polarize local communities either in Ukraine or in Russia. In this sense, the monument erected in 2016 in Moscow is rather an exception – it became controversial because of the post-Crimean political context, its 'federal' status, and its symbolic allusions to Vladimir Putin. But even in this case public debate in Moscow focused mainly on the choice of location, the size, and the appropriateness of such a monumental statue in a city historically unrelated to Vladimir's life. In the Russian regions, the monumental commemorations of Vladimir / Volodymyr have caused little political controversy and have usually been supported by a broad coalition of mnemonic actors, including local authorities, business, and the Church, as well as some representatives of the local intelligentsia – historians, journalists, etc.

Political scientist Andreĭ Makarkin points to a "monumental particularism" in post-Soviet Russia where, in contrast to the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union, the right to decide to whom to erect a monument is left

[7] Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 90.

[8] Ibid.

to the regions. According to Makarkin, regional authorities and municipalities in Russia usually initiate their own projects while trying of course not to irritate the centre but to fit into the current political trend.[9]

In the coalition of local authorities, business, and the Church the respective interests of the various mnemonic actors of course differ. While the authorities are interested in the consolidation of a quasi-ideology providing society with 'traditional values', local business (often intertwined with power) seeks to promote the image of an (Orthodox) benefactor. The Russian Orthodox Church does not act as a single mnemonic actor. Even if the monumental commemoration of Orthodox saints is usually supported by local Church representatives, some priests have reservations about the use of monumental sculptures which is seen more as a Catholic than an Orthodox tradition.[10] The initiative thus usually comes not from the Church *per se* but from various church-affiliated groups or individuals. Some of those actors actively involved in the monumental commemoration of St. Vladimir, other saints, and prominent representatives of the Orthodox Church will be addressed below: for example, the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society, the Russian Military-Historical Society or the head of the Union of Orthodox Women, Galina Anan'eva. One interesting and underresearched type of mnemonic actor are the sculptors and architects themselves. Some of them have pronounced political views and a sense of personal mission: they initiate monuments and actively promote their projects, looking for support from local sponsors and the Church. Two such sculptors in particular, Viacheslav Klykov (1939–2006) and Sergeĭ Isakov (born 1954), have played an important role in the monumental commemoration of Russian Orthodox saints, state leaders, and cultural icons. Their contributions to the creation of the monumental cult of Vladimir in Russia will be addressed below.

The same coalition of mnemonic actors – local authorities, business, and the Church(es) – can be found in Ukraine. Ukrainian regions and municipalities have been even more independent from the centre in terms of monumental commemoration, which has often been used by regional

[9] Andreĭ Makarkin, 'Pamiatniki sovremennoĭ Rossii', *Pro et Contra* 14, 1 (2010): 127–38.

[10] Author's personal conversation with Sergeĭ Chapnin, journalist and 2009–15 executive editor of the Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, an official publication of the Russian Orthodox Church (27 March 2018, IWM, Vienna). According to Chapnin, there is no tradition of veneration of monuments in Russian Orthodoxy, but no direct ban either. This gap makes possible the proliferation of Orthodox monumental art.

elites to demonstrate discontent or even directly challenge the cultural policy of the centre. Against the background of the 'memory wars' in the Ukrainian regions, St. Volodymyr appears as a reconciliatory symbol whose meaning can be stretched from the pro-Russian to the Ukrainian nationalist.

1.3. Between the Public and the Sacred: Making Use of Monuments to St. Vladimir / St. Volodymyr

Finally, the third approach relevant to this article underlines the performative aspect of monumental commemoration. Monuments are contextualized through commemorative and cultural events, political gatherings, performances, and mass actions. The initial meaning of a monument can be changed by means of its various uses and re-appropriation by new actors. What are the political, religious, and everyday uses of monuments to St. Vladimir / St. Volodymyr? It seems that the mnemonic actors involved in such projects often think no further than the official inauguration (fig. 1).

From the canonical perspective of the Orthodox Church these monuments are problematic, as they cannot be considered sacral objects like icons or frescoes. Can they be involved in religious ceremonies, such as worship or processions? Often spatially linked to Orthodox churches, these monuments nevertheless belong to the urban public space. It seems that they are located at the boundary between the religious and the secular and thus demonstrate some important features of post-Soviet post-secularism. According to Sergeĭ Chapnin, the proliferation of monuments to Orthodox saints signals the establishment of a new public cult, where religion is intertwined with the Soviet tradition of monumental propaganda.[11] This reincarnation of Soviet monumental propaganda corresponds with the new Russian regime of "caesaropapism".[12]

[11] 'Monumental propaganda' (*monumental'naia propaganda*) refers to the Soviet politics of using monumental art for the purpose of communist propaganda. It goes back to Lenin's 1918 plan of removing the tsarist monuments and mass construction of monuments to the Bolshevik Revolution. See Christina Lodder, 'Lenin's Plan for Monumental Propaganda', in *Art of the Soviets: Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-Party State, 1917–1992*, eds. Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

[12] Author's personal conversation with Sergeĭ Chapnin (see note 11).

Fig. 1: Inauguration of the monument to St. Vladimir near the newly constructed Sophia Cathedral of the Wisdom of God in Samara, Russia, 6 May 2018. The Cathedral itself was inaugurated on 23 September 2018. © Alexandr Blinov / Dreamstime.com

In Ukraine, where attempts to consolidate a 'national church' have so far failed, it would be difficult to generalize about the political uses of the monuments to Volodymyr (outside Kyïv, they are located in small towns and villages, not even in oblast' centres), while in Russia they seem to be increasingly used in the official celebration of important historical dates. This concerns first and foremost the Day of the Christianization of Rus' (28 July) which was added to the "List of days of military glory and memorial days of Russia" by decree of President Medvedev.[13] To be fair, a similar state holiday – the Day of the Christianization of Kyïvan Rus'–Ukraine – was established by decree of President Viktor Yushchenko two years earlier, on the occasion of the celebration of the 1020th anniversary of the Christianization of Rus' in 2008. As part of Yushchenko's memory politics agenda (consolidating the narrative of the Ukrainian nation as deeply rooted in European / Christian civilization), this date served as the perfect occasion for addressing the issue of the unification of the Orthodox churches in Ukraine and the official recogni-

[13] Nikolaĭ Solntsev, 'Kreshchenie Rusi: Istoriia iubileev i memorial'naia politika', *Istoricheskie praktiki izucheniia politogeneza. Vestnik Nizhegorodskogo Universiteta im. N.I. Lobachevskogo* 6, 3 (2012): 36–41.

tion of the Ukrainian national church as autocephalous. The occasion was used by the Ukrainian authorities for an attempt at a diplomatic breakthrough in Kyïv's relations with Constantinople. Patriarch Bartholomew, the principal guest at the celebrations, was given the highest honours, a fact which rather irritated another guest, the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Aleksiĭ II.[14] As part of the official programme, Viktor Yushchenko and Patriarch Bartholomew laid flowers at the monument to Prince Volodymyr, as well as at monuments to Princess Ol'ha, to Cyril and Methodius, and to Andrew the Apostle (a secular and actually typically Soviet public ritual).

The celebration of the same date in summer 2013 looked quite different: the 1025th anniversary of the Christianization of Kyïvan Rus', under President Viktor Yanukovych celebrated on Volodymyr Hill in Kyïv, was attended by President Putin and the new Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Kirill. A few months before the Euromaidan protests and in the midst of preparations for signing the Association Agreement with the EU, this was the last visit of Vladimir Putin to Ukraine to date. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 was a watershed in Ukrainian–Russian relations and the following significant dates, the 1000th anniversary of St. Vladimir's death (2015) and the 1030th anniversary of the Christianization of Rus' (2018) were for the first time celebrated in Russia separately from Ukraine.

With the consolidation of the new post-2014 conservative consensus in Russian politics the meaning of 28 July has changed: from an official diplomatic event meant to demonstrate the special relationship between Russia and Ukraine it has been turned into a domestic political ritual, called the "church-state celebration" in the media (*tserkovno-gosudarstvennyĭ prazdnik*). The new monument to St. Vladimir erected in 2016 in Moscow is the perfect location for such celebrations. For example, on 28 July 2018, on the occasion of the 1030th anniversary of the Christianization of Rus', an Orthodox procession led by Patriarch Kirill and President Putin went from Sobornaia Square in the Kremlin to the St. Vladimir monument on Borovitskiĭ Hill where a prayer service was held.[15] Judging by media reports, a similar 'invented tradition' can be

[14] 'Political, Religious Battles Loom Between Ukraine, Russia over Orthodox Baptism Celebration', *International Herald Tribune*, 24 July 2008.

[15] 'V Rossii otprazdnovali 1030-letie kreshcheniia Rusi', 28 July 2018, available at www.rbc.ru/photoreport/28/07/2018/5b5c60e29a794754ff08fda4 (last visited 24 October 2019).

observed on 28 July in other Russian cities possessing monuments to St. Vladimir.

In Ukraine, where there is a similar tendency to celebrate 28 July with Orthodox processions frequently joined by politicians, political instability and competition between the Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kyïv Patriarchate) complicate the picture. Volodymyr Hill with its monument to Prince Volodymyr is an important location for events organized by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) (UOC (MP)) as well as by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kyïv Patriarchate) (UOC (KP)) (fig. 2).

In the last years these events have been separated in time and space: the procession of the UOC (MP) takes place on 27 July, starting at Volodymyr Hill and heading to the Kyïv Pechers'k Lavra, while the procession of the UOC (KP) on 28 July leaves from St. Volodymyr's Cathedral and culminates with a prayer at Volodymyr Hill. Political tensions (and competition in numbers) grew in 2018 when the celebration of the 1030th anniversary of the Christianization of Kyïvan Rus' was used by president Poroshenko for the promotion of the idea of an autocephalous Ukrainian Church. The procession organized by the UOC (MP) on 27 July was joined by some opposition politicians such as Mykhaĭlo Dobkin, Nestor Shufrych, and Iuriĭ Boĭko. Participants arriving from outside Kyïv reported "obstacles" created by the authorities to prevent the mobilization of UOC (MP) followers.[16]

The procession of the UOC (KP) under the banner 'Prayer for Ukraine' took place on 28 July and was joined by President Poroshenko with his wife and other Ukrainian officials; the same day Poroshenko spoke at the monument to St. Volodymyr at an official celebration attended by representatives of all Christian Churches in Ukraine. One year later, in 2019, the procession on 28 July was organized by the newly established Orthodox Church of Ukraine (Pravoslavna Tserkva Ukraïny, PCU) and headed by its leader, Metropolitan Epifaniĭ. In his interview, Epifaniĭ said that he feels no competition for the legacy of Prince Volodymyr: his act of baptizing Kyïvans in the River Dnipro prepared

[16] 'Sviatkuvannia khreshchennia Rusi – Iak viriany Moskovs'koho patriarkhatu molylys' ta ishly khresnym khodom', *Hromadske Radio*, 27 July 2018, available at https://hromadske.radio/news/2018/07/27/svyatkuvannya-hreshchennya-rusi-yak-viryany-moskovskogo-patriarhatu-molylys-ta-yshly-hresnym-hodom-fotoreportazh (last visited 24 October 2019).

the ground for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, while the history of the Russian Orthodox Church in fact started some centuries later.[17]

Fig. 2: Prayer service near the Monument to St. Volodymyr on Volodymyr Hill in the center of Kyïv, Ukraine, 28 July 2019, the Day of Christianization of Kyïvan Rus'–Ukraine. © paparazzza / Shutterstock

It seems, however, that beyond this newly established tradition of celebrating the Day of the Christianization of Rus' and their function as an icon of local identity (or local brand), the monuments to St. Vladimir / St. Volodymyr find little use in everyday life. (By comparison, monuments to the Orthodox Saints Pëtr and Fevroniia, linked in the context of 'traditional values' to the Day of Family, Love, and Fidelity (8 July) and promoted by the Russian Orthodox Church as an alternative to St. Valentine's Day, have become popular sites for wedding photos.) A special case seems to be the small town of Lanivtsi in Ternopil' Oblast' in Ukraine, where the Day of the Christianization of Kyïvan Rus' on 28 July coincides with the Day of the City, and the monument to St. Volodymyr, erected on the spot where a statue of Vladimir Lenin used to

[17] 'Konkurentsiï z Rosiieiu za spadok kniazia Volodymyra ne vidchuvaiemo – Mytropolyt Epifaniï', *Belsat TV*, 29 July 2019, available at https://belsat.eu/ua/news/konkurentsiyi-z-rosiyeyu-za-spadok-knyazya-volodimira-ne-vidchuvayemo-mitropolit-epifanij/ (last visited 24 October 2019).

stand, dominates the town centre. The official programme of 28 July thus includes, apart from the traditional prayer service, the honouring of fallen soldiers and veterans of the military conflict in the Donbas as well as the usual entertainment programme for children and adults.[18]

Different again is the range of public uses of St. Volodymyr / St. Vladimir memorials outside the borders of Ukraine and Russia. For the local Ukrainian and Russian diaspora(s) they often serve as symbolic markers representing their existence as separate groups, as spots for private meetings and public gatherings, and as sites for the expression of collective emotion and the manifestation of national identity. Thus, the St. Volodymyr monument in London became in 2013–14 a site for 'Euromaidan London' gatherings and later served as a site of protest against Russian aggression and of public mourning for Ukrainian victims in the Donbas (fig. 3).

Fig. 3: The statue of St. Volodymyr in London was turned into a spontaneous memorial to the victims of the Maidan massacre and the war in Donbas. © Slawek Kozakiewicz / Dreamstime.com

[18] Ternopil' Regional State Administration, 'Stepan Barna pryvitav lanivchan iz Dnem Mista', 27 July 2015, available at http://www.oda.te.gov.ua/main/en/news/detail/98630.htm?lightWords=ланівці (last visited 24 October 2019).

2. The Proliferation of Monuments to St. Vladimir / St. Volodymyr

2.1. St. Volodymyr in Kyïv (1853)

The 'proto-monument' to Vladimir / Volodymyr, so to speak, is situated in Kyïv, on one of the slopes of the River Dnipro, which is now called Volodymyr Hill, a place traditionally associated with the baptism of the Kyïvans in 988 (see fig. 2 above). This is the oldest sculptural monument in Kyïv, and it has long been one of the symbols of the city. Before Peter the Great, historical events and personalities were commemorated in Russia according to the Orthodox tradition: by building churches, monasteries and chapels, and not with statues or obelisks. St. Vladimir thus became one of first modern monumental statues in the Russian Empire.[19] Little wonder that the Metropolitan of Kyïv was critical of the project: he considered it absurd to build an "idol" to honour someone who fought against pagan idols.[20] This historical detail is not unimportant, because of the similar arguments used by some Orthodox conservative critics today, protesting against the erection of monuments to Russian Orthodox saints: as already mentioned, monumental sculptures are often seen as representative of a Catholic rather than an Orthodox artistic tradition.

Almost twenty years passed between the approval of the initiative by Tsar Nicholas I and the erection of the monument in 1853.[21] Designed by the sculptor Vasiliĭ Demuth-Malinovskiĭ, the statue of Vladimir with a large cross in his right hand was set on an octagonal plinth in pseudo-Byzantine style created by the architect Aleksandr Ton; the project was finalized by Peter Clodt, Nicholas I's favourite sculptor. The total height of the monument is 20.4 metres, of which the statue itself is 4.4 metres. It remained the only monument to St. Vladimir in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union until the late 1980s.[22]

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[19] Kirill Sokol, *Monumenty imperii* (Moscow: Grant, 2001).

[20] Ivan Zotsenko and Aliona Tron', 'Do istoriï sporudzhennia pam"iatnyka sviatomu rivnoapostol'nomu kniaziu Volodymyru v Kyievi', *Opus mixtum* 3 (2015): 172–6.

[21] Larysa Tolochko, 'Konkurs u Sankt-Peterburz'kiĭ akademiï khudozhestv na proekt pam''iatnyka kniaziu Volodymyru dlia m. Kyieva (1842)', in *Nestorivs'ki studiï*, materials of the XIII. academic conference "Kniaz' Volodymyr ta ïoho doba: Kul'turno-mystetski nadbannia Kyïvs'koï Rusi", available at https://www.kplavra.kiev.ua/ua/node/462 (last visited 24 October 2019).

[22] There are also statues of St. Vladimir as parts of bigger architectural ensembles, e.g. the Monument to the Millennium of Russia in Velikiĭ Novgorod and the Kazan Cathedral in St. Petersburg.

Together with the opening of the St. Vladimir Kyïv University in 1835 and the construction of the St. Vladimir Cathedral (1862–82), the erection of the monument can be seen as part of the imperial place-making policy aimed at the Russification of Russia's western borderlands, countering Polish cultural and political influences and reclaiming Kyïv as an ancient Russian city and the cradle of the Orthodox Christianity. In summer 1888, Kyïv was the central site of the official celebrations devoted to the 900th anniversary of the "Christianization of the Russian People";[23] the Vladimir monument was, of course, one of the symbolic focal points of the event.

The Soviet regime, while initially hostile and later rather indifferent to the Orthodox Church, came to understand the symbolic importance of the St. Vladimir monument in Kyïv; in the late Soviet era it was integrated into the official ideology of the 'friendship of peoples'. In 1982, the Friendship Arch symbolising Ukrainian–Russian brotherhood was built in close proximity to the monument. The inauguration was linked to the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the USSR and the 1150th jubilee of the city of Kyïv.

The monument includes two bronze statues of a Russian and a Ukrainian worker ostentatiously holding aloft the Soviet Order of the Friendship of Peoples. Another element of the monument is a granite stele depicting the participants of the Pereiaslav Council of 1654 – a historical event interpreted as the 're-unification' of Ukraine with Russia. In this way, the monument established the historical continuity of Ukrainian–Russian 'brotherhood', connecting it to Prince Volodymyr / Vladimir, who in this context symbolizes the common ancient origins of the two peoples. This symbolism survived the Soviet Union and its official ideology as the monument came to symbolize the 'special partnership' of the two post-Soviet nations belonging to the same Orthodox civilization. As already mentioned, in summer 2013, the 1025th anniversary of the Christianization of Rus' was celebrated on Volodymyr Hill with the participation of Presidents Viktor Yanukovych and Vladimir Putin and the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Kirill.

With the beginning of the Russian–Ukrainian conflict and in the context of decommunization, a public debate about the future of the

[23] Heather J. Coleman, 'From Kiev Across All Russia: The 900th Anniversary of the Christianization of Rus' and the Making of a National Saint in the Imperial Borderlands', *Ab Imperio* 19, 4 (2018): 95–129.

Monument to the Friendship of Peoples started:[24] despite some radical suggestions the monument has so far remained in place. The Arch of Friendship has become an object of artistic re-interpretation: for example, in November 2018, a symbolic 'crack' appeared in the middle of the arch, referring to the deep crisis in Ukrainian–Russian relations. Against this background the St. Volodymyr monument was also re-contextualized as a symbol of Kyïv's historical precedence over Moscow and a proof – contrary to the Kremlin's rhetoric – of Ukraine's centuries-long existence as a nation.

2.2. The Millennium of the Christianization of Rus' in 1988

For the first time since the collapse of the Russian Empire, the issue of a monumental commemoration of St. Vladimir arose on the occasion of the Millennium of the Christianization of Rus' in 1988. The celebration was first intended to be an internal event for the Russian Orthodox Church, but preparations coincided with the unfolding of Perestroika and the liberalization of the Soviet regime. Mikhail Gorbachev, who was seeking to improve relations with the Church, used this occasion as a showcase for his political reforms. The radical turn in Soviet policy towards the Church was welcomed by the liberal part of society and by the West. On the occasion of the Millennium, a monument to St. Vladimir was erected in 1988 on the territory of the Danilov Monastery in Moscow which in 1983 had been restituted to the Church (fig. 4). A copy of the monument by the prolific Soviet / Russian sculptor Aleksandr Rukavishnikov[25] was constructed in Buenos-Aires (Argentina) on the initiative of the local Russian diaspora and the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. This was a sign of rapprochement between the Soviet state and the 'white emigration' diaspora in the West still suspicious about Perestroika. Similarly, a monument to St. Vladimir was

> "commissioned by the Russian Community in Brisbane on the occasion of the millennium of Christian culture in Russia in 1988, and presented to the Uni-

[24] See, for example ' "Arka druzhby narodiv" u Kyievi ta viĭna z Rosiieiu: shcho robyty z radians'kym monumentom?', *Radio Svoboda*, 24 January 2018, available at https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28994013.html (last visited 24 October 2019).

[25] Aleksandr Rukavishnikov, who belongs to the third generation of a dynasty of Russian / Soviet sculptors, is especially known to the public for his monument to Vladimir Vysotskiĭ at the Vagan'kovo Cemetery. In 2014, Rukavishnikov signed a collective letter from Russian cultural figures in support of Putin's policies in Ukraine and Crimea.

versity of Queensland and the people of Brisbane to commemorate the Bicentenary of Australia in that year, and twenty-five years of Russian studies at the University of Queensland".[26]

It was unveiled in 1995 in front of the university building. The inscription in Russian says that "St. Vladimir, The Great Grand Prince of Kyïvan Rus' (980–1015) brought Christianity, literacy and learning to his nation from Byzantium in 988 AD".[27]

Fig. 4: Monument to St. Vladimir on the territory of the Danilov Monastery in Moscow. © akostra.livejournal.com

[26] Monument Australia, 'St. Vladimir', available at https://monumentaustralia.org.au/themes/landscape/settlement/display/100277-st.-vladimir- (last visited 24 October 2019).

[27] Ibid.

Fig. 5: Statue of St. Volodymyr in front of the St. Volodymyr Institute in Toronto, Canada. © Greg's Southern Ontario (catching Up Slowly), Flickr, available at https://www.flickr.com/photos/57156785@N02/12999161555/in/photostream/ (last visited 11 August 2020).

On the same occasion, the Millennium of the Christianization of Rus', the Ukrainian diaspora inaugurated monuments to St. Volodymyr in Toronto and in London. Both were installed in front of Ukrainian cul-

tural institutions (the St. Volodymyr Institute in Toronto and the Ukrainian Club in London). The Toronto monument bears the inscription "Baptizer of Ukraine" (fig. 5), and the London one "Ruler of Ukraine".

Both statues were created by the well-known Canadian-Ukrainian sculptor Leo Mol who is famous for, among other works, his monument to Taras Shevchenko in Washington, D.C.[28] Another statue of St. Volodymyr, created by Leo Mol on the occasion of the Millennium of the Christianization of Rus' as a gift for Pope John Paul II, was inaugurated in Rome in 2015 on the territory of Saint Sophia, the Greek Catholic church which serves as a cultural centre and meeting place for the Ukrainian diaspora.[29]

While some Russian cultural activists claim all St. Vladimir's monuments in the West as "Russian",[30] the inscriptions, language, and use of symbols (such as the Ukrainian trident) clearly indicate their 'nationality'. St. Vladimir's monuments outside Russia and Ukraine remain under the care of the respective diasporas and they are often integrated into commemorative and religious ceremonies organized by local Ukrainian and Russian communities. Thus in 2013, the 1025th anniversary of the Christianization of Rus' was celebrated in front of the St. Volodymyr statue in London by the local Ukrainian community with the participation of the Ukrainian embassy.[31] The 1000th anniversary of Vladimir's death in 2015 was commemorated in Buenos-Aires in front of the St. Vladimir statue under the supervision of Russian state cultural institutions (such as *Rossotrudnichestvo*) and the Russian Orthodox Church. This

[28] Leo Mol, full name Leonid Molodozhanyn (1915–2009), was born in Ukraine, studied arts in Vienna and Leningrad, and moved to Canada after World War II. More than three hundred of his sculptures are displayed in the Leo Mol Sculpture Garden in Winnipeg where he lived and worked.

[29] The Greek Catholic Church of Saint Sophia in Rome was built in the 1960s by Cardinal Josyf Slipyi after he had been released from the GULAG where he had spent 18 years.

[30] See, for example, the interview with Galina Anan'ina, head of the Orthodox Women of Russia Association, where she argues that the above-mentioned monuments in London and Toronto "were built at the cost of the Russian Orthodox Church and of the local communities of our Orthodox compatriots". Igor' Elkov, 'Vladimir u Kremlia. Pamiatniki Kniaziu – krestiteliu Rusi ustanovleny dazhe v Avstralii i Argentine', *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 12 November 2015, available at https://rg.ru/2015/11/12/pamyatnik-site.html (last visited 24 October 2019).

[31] 'U Londoni takozh vidsviatkuvaly 1025-richchia Khreshchennia Rusi', in: *Den'*, 27 July 2013, available at https://day.kyiv.ua/uk/news/270713-u-londoni-takozh-vidsvyatkuvali-1025-richchya-hreshchennya-rusi (last visited 3 August 2020).

latter event was part of the large-scale official Russian campaign which connected the 1000th anniversary of St. Vladimir's death with the 'return of Crimea' (more on this topic below).

2.3. The Collapse of the USSR and the Proliferation of Statues of St. Vladimir in Russia

The next wave of monumental commemorations of St. Vladimir / Volodymyr in Russia and Ukraine started after 1991 and reflects the trauma of the Soviet collapse and the search for new national and local identities. The most prominent examples of this period are the Vladimir statues built in Sevastopol' in 1993 and in Belgorod in 1999, both by the Russian sculptor Viacheslav Klykov (1939–2006). Klykov was famous not only for his artistic work but also for his political activities as a Russian nationalist and monarchist. Already during Perestroika he had joined the notorious Pamiat Society; later he headed the International Foundation for Slavic Writing and Culture (*Mezhdunarodnyĭ Fond Slavianskoĭ Pis'mennosti i Kul'tury*), was president of the Slavic Economic Union and, during the last years of his life, led the re-established Union of the Russian People (*Soiuz Russkogo Naroda*). Being deeply anti-Soviet – Klykov supported the removal of the Dzerzhinskiĭ Statue at Lubianka in 1991 and was proud of never having made a single sculpture of Lenin[32] – at the same time he was profoundly opposed to the politics of Yeltsin. Some of his projects caused political scandals:[33] from the point of view of today's Russian nationalism, he was ahead of his time.

In 1987, afraid of nationalist mobilization, the Soviet authorities had put a stop to plans already made public for the erection of Klykov's statue of Sergius of Radonezh in Moscow Oblast' (the statue was eventually erected one year later). Klykov's monument to Tsar Nicholas I was blown up by Russian anarchists, and the local Communists in Irkutsk fervently

[32] Viacheslav Klykov, 'Pamiatnikov slishkom malo', *Rossiĭskaia Gazeta*, 2 December 2005.

[33] Klykov's monument to the Kyïvan Prince Sviatoslav was supposed to be erected in Belgorod but caused protests by some Russian Jewish organizations due to its use of the Star of David; eventually the monument was erected in the countryside. On Khazaria in Russian nationalist discourse, see Victor A. Shnirelman, 'The Story of a Euphemism: The Khazars in Russian Nationalist Literature', in *The World of the Khazars: New Perspectives*, eds. Peter Golden, Haggai Ben-Shammai, and András Roná-Tas (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2007), 353–72.

opposed his monument to the leader of the White movement, Admiral Kolchak.

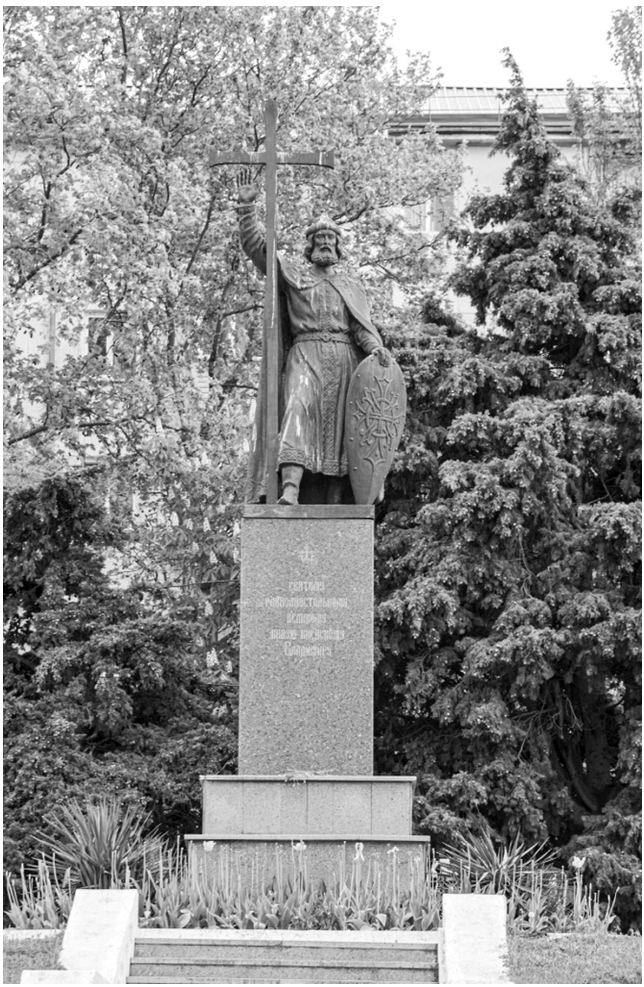

Fig. 6: Statue of St. Vladimir in Sevastopol', Crimea. © Igor Litvyak / Shutterstock

Klykov's prolific work and political activism in the 1990s were aimed at the re-nationalization of the Russian cultural landscape but also at redrawing the symbolic and territorial boundaries of Russianness – the latter was, for example, the case with the Pushkin monument in Tiraspol in

Moldova in 1991, in the midst of the Transdniestrian conflict. In the early 1990s, Klykov donated some of his sculptures to the city of Sevastopol', a highly symbolic place for the Russian national imagination which after 1991 found itself in independent Ukraine. Among them was the monument to St. Volodymyr erected in 1993 on the territory of Chersoneses where according to legend Prince Vladimir had been baptized (fig. 6).

The project was sponsored by the Russian businessman Mikhail Zhidkov who together with Klykov headed the Slavic Economic Union. Crimea in the early 1990s was struggling with pro-Russian separatism, but the inauguration of the monument was not controversial. It was the annexation of Crimea, rationalized by, among other arguments, the historical role of Crimea in the Christianization of Russia, that retroactively invested this monument with a new political meaning.

Another St. Vladimir monument created by Klykov was erected in 1998 in Belgorod, a Russian city situated some 40 km from the Ukrainian border (fig. 7). Initially it was a local project, part of the rebranding of the city by the local authorities, and it was in fact based on a misinterpretation of historical facts. The local amateur historian Iuriĭ Shmelev claimed that, according to *The Tale of Past Years* or the *Primary Chronicle*, Belgorod had been founded by Vladimir the Great and was thus much older than had been understood previously. Despite the protests of professional historians and experts Shmelev managed to convince the Governor, Savchenko, and then prime minister Chernomyrdin gave his blessing to an official celebration of the 'Millennium of Belgorod'. The historical error was later clarified, but the ambiguity regarding the year of foundation of Belgorod remained. The St. Volodymyr Statue erected on the top of Kharkiv Hill, a by-product of the false Millennium, has meanwhile become an important marker in the urban landscape and a symbol of the city where Orthodox faith, along with the memory of the Battle of Kursk in World War II, is considered a pillar of local ideology. Belgorod presents itself as a stronghold of Orthodox belief and national identity on Russia's new western border.

In this context, Ukraine is often seen as a source of various 'spiritual threats' such as schism, the expansion of Protestant sects and of Catholic influences. The dominant status of the Orthodox Church corresponds with the Pan-Slavism and Russian nationalism popular among local elites. No wonder that Viacheslav Klykov, who due to his Kursk origins is considered almost a local, created several important monuments in Belgorod and the region. Among them is the Prokhorovka War Memorial

which inscribes the epic Kursk tank battle into the centuries-long history of Russian military glory.[34]

Fig. 7: Monument to St. Vladimir in Belgorod, Russia. Photograph by Panoramio, license CC BY 3.0, available at https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A4%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%BB:Monument_to_Prince_Vladimir_-_from_panoramio.jpg (last visited 11 August 2020).

In the context of the Ukrainian–Russian borderlands the monument to Prince Vladimir in Belgorod has an ambivalent meaning as it symbolizes East Slavic unity and at the same time presents the Russian response to Ukrainian claims on the heritage of Kyïvan Rus'. Russian Wikipedia emphasizes that Belgorod's Vladimir is some metres higher than his Kyïv counterpart.

From the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s Belgorod, together with neighbouring Ukrainian Kharkiv, promoted ideas of cross-border cooperation and 'East Slavic brotherhood'. In 2000, Presidents Putin, Kuchma, and

[34] The Prokhorovka War Memorial now includes a monument to Viacheslav Klykov created by his son, also a sculptor who shares his father's mission and vision of the Russian past. In 2017, a statue of St. Vladimir created by Andreĭ Klykov was erected on the territory of the Valaam Monastery in Russian Karelia.

Lukashenka visited the monument to St. Vladimir and the Prokhorovka Memorial during their Belgorod Summit.[35]

The case of another Russian city, Vladimir, is similar to Belgorod. A medieval town, part of the Golden Ring and the administrative centre of Vladimir Oblast' in Central Russia, it was known in the Russian Empire as Vladimir-on-Kliaz'ma or Vladimir-Zalesskiĭ, to distinguish it from Volodymyr-Volyns'kyĭ, now in Ukraine. Traditionally, the founding date of Vladimir was acknowledged as 1108, and this view attributes the founding of the city and its name to Vladimir Monomakh, another prince of Kyïvan Rus'. In accordance with this view, the 850th anniversary of Vladimir was celebrated in 1958 (and two years later, in 1960, the monument to the founders of Vladimir was erected in front of the local railway station). In the early 1990s, however, as in the case of Belgorod, some local historians put forward a new theory that the city had been founded not by Vladimir Monomakh, but by Vladimir the Great and is thus two hundred years older. This view remains controversial among historians, but the new foundation date of 990 has been recognized by the local authorities and written into official documentation.

It would be surprising if the city of Vladimir had not had its own monument of St. Vladimir (celebrated now as 'the founder of the city', according to the new local historical narrative), and indeed there are even two of them. The more recent was erected in 2015 (at the occasion of the Millennium of Vladimir's death) near the construction site of the new St. Volodymyr church. But the more prominent is the monument "to the baptizers of Vladimir lands" – the "Equal to the Apostles" Prince Vladimir and Saint Fëdor, which was inaugurated in 2007 (fig. 8). The occasion was the celebration of the 850th anniversary of the transfer of the capital city of Rus' from Kyïv to Vladimir. The monument (the only equestrian statue of Vladimir) was designed by Sergeĭ Isakov (born 1954), another prominent Russian nationalist and Orthodox sculptor.

Compared to Viacheslav Klykov and his oppositional radical nationalism, Sergeĭ Isakov's Orthodox Russian nationalism is rather mainstream and corresponds with the recent turn to Orthodoxy of Putin's establishment. In 2015, Isakov created one more St. Vladimir statue for the small city of Bataĭsk in the Rostov-on-Don Oblast' where he had moved from

[35] Tatiana Zhurzhenko, 'Shared Memory Culture? Nationalizing the "Great Patriotic War" in the Ukrainian–Russian Borderlands', in *Memory and Change in Europe: Eastern Perspectives*, eds. Małgorzata Pakier and Joanna Wawrzyniak (Oxford: Berghahn, 2016), 169–92.

Fig. 8: Monument to the baptizers of Vladimir lands, St. Vladimir and St. Fëdor, in Vladimir, Russia. © Olga Volodina / Dreamstime.com

Moscow, after years of studying and working in Europe.[36] As the author of numerous monuments to Orthodox saints[37] his most important commission, however, is a series of monumental statues of St. Nicholas, traditionally the most respected saint in Russia, to be built along the borders of Russia, and in this way re-mapping Russia as an Orthodox space.[38] Monumental statues of St. Nicholas have thus appeared, not without the resistance of some local Orthodox clerics, in Anadyr', Kamchatka, the Kurile Islands, Franz-Josef Land, Kaliningrad, Minsk, Polotsk, Eĭsk, Bataĭsk, Omsk (and even in Spain). Among the institutions supporting this project are the Saint Nicholas Foundation and the Imperial Orthodox

[36] 'V Bataĭske otkryt pamiatnik sviatomu kniaziu Vladimiru raboty chlena IPPO Sergeia Isakova', 19 October 2015, available at http://www.ippo.ru/science/article/v-batayske-otkryt-pamyatnik-svyatomu-knyazyu-vladi-101496 (last visited 24 October 2019).

[37] This includes the most recent project of a St. George statue created for the separatist-controlled Ukrainian Donets'k and presented to DNR leaders.

[38] Alekseĭ Fedotov. 'Skul'ptura, proslavliaiushchaia Boga', *Russkia narodnaia liniia*, 29 December 2014, available at http://ruskline.ru/special_opinion/2014/12/skulptura_proslavlyayuwaya_boga/ (last visited 24 October 2019).

Palestinian Society[39] (both led by people who seem happily to combine careers in the security services, big business, and the Church).

Some new monuments to Vladimir were erected in Russia on the occasion of the 1025th anniversary of the Christianization of Rus'. One of them, relatively modest, was built in 2012 in Tula near the local St. Vladimir Church (fig. 9).[40]

Fig. 9: Monument to St. Vladimir in Tula, Russia. © Anna Krivitskaia / Dreamstime.com

Both the church and the monument are situated on the territory of the Tula Machine-Building Plant (*Tulamashzavod*), a major Russian producer of guns and missiles for land, air, and naval forces. The monument was sponsored by the company and manufactured by its workers and thereby serves as an example of a corporate symbolic politics.

[39] The Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society, created in 1882 by the Russian imperial family to cultivate ties with the Holy Land, underwent several transformations in the Soviet era and was re-established after 1991 as an instrument of Russian soft power in the region. Since 2007, it has been headed by Sergeĭ Stepashin, the former FSB chief and a close ally of Putin. Among other tasks, the Palestinian Society is currently concerned with the restoration of Orthodox churches in Syria.

[40] 'V Tule otkryli pamiatnik krestiteliu Rusi – kniaziu Vladimiru', *Tul'skaia Pressa*, 27 August 2012, available at https://www.tulapressa.ru/2012/07/v-tule-otkryt-pamyatnik-krestitelyu-rusi-knyazyu-vladimiru/ (last visited 24 October 2019).

Another St. Vladimir was erected in 2013 in Astrakhan', in front of the city's St. Vladimir Cathedral (fig. 10). This church, one of the showplaces of the southern Russian city on the Volga delta, was constructed at the end of the 19th century to mark the 900th anniversary of the Christianization of Rus' and to promote the conversion of the local Muslim population to the Orthodox faith.

Fig. 10: Monument to St. Vladimir in front of the St. Vladimir Cathedral, Astrakhan', Russia. © Valery Bocman / Dreamstime.com

In the 1930s, the building was taken from the church and by a miracle survived attempts to erase it during the Khrushchev era, only to serve for the next thirty years as a local bus station. It was only in 1999 that the cathedral was re-opened: the erection of the monument in 2013 was combined with the improvement of the surrounding space, thus accomplishing a long-term project. As reported by the official website of the Astrakhan' authorities, Metropolitan Iona who consecrated the monument announced that the statue had become an Orthodox icon and that everybody who passed it could now pray to it as an icon of St. Vladimir.[41]

[41] 'V Astrakhani otkryli pamiatnik sviatomu kniaziu Vladimiru', *Novostnoĭ portal goroda Astrakhani*, 23 December 2013, available at http://news.astrgorod.ru/news/v-astrahani-otkryli-pamyatnik-svyatomu-knyazyu-vladimiru-0 (last visited 3 August 2020).

Especially interesting in the context of our research is the fact that the monument was presented to the city by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. Leyla Aliyeva, Vice-President of the foundation and daughter of the current President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, personally attended the inauguration and in recognition was awarded the Order of Princess Ol'ha by the Russian Orthodox Church.[42] Leyla Aliyeva, a high society person living between Moscow and Baku, is a key figure in the Azeri diaspora in Russia and in public diplomacy between Russia and Azerbaijan. The gift to the city of Astrakhan', which hosts a considerable Azeri diaspora, thus involves several dimensions: it symbolizes good relations between Moscow and Baku, and together with other elements of the urban landscape (the Bridge of Friendship Between Russia and Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev Square, and the Heydar Aliyev Monument) it legitimizes the presence of the Azeri minority in the city and endorses the monument with the additional meaning of multi-confessional dialogue. It is quite interesting that the author of the St. Vladimir statue, Azeri sculptor Natik Aliyev (not a relation of the president's family) also created the statue of Heydar Aliyev in Astrakhan' (as well as Aliyev statues in Kyïv, Tbilisi, and Belgrade) and the Monument to Baku–Astrakhan' Friendship in Baku. The latter monument was inaugurated in the same year as the Vladimir statue in Astrakhan', in 2013.

2.4. Monuments to St. Volodymyr in Post-Soviet Ukraine (1991–2013)

After 1991, new monuments to St. Volodymyr were erected not only in Russia, but also in Ukraine. These were local projects, not too ambitious and not intended to compete with the monument in Kyïv. In most cases, they refer to Kyïvan Rus' and to Prince Volodymyr in particular as a source of local identity and as a local brand. Apart from the above-mentioned monument in Sevastopol' created by Klykov, the monument to St. Volodymyr by the L'viv sculptor L'ubomyr Iaremchuk[43] was erected in 2000 in Volodymyr-Volyns'kyĭ, a small town in the Volyn' Oblast' twelve kilometres from the border with Poland. Situated in the city's

[42] Ibid.

[43] Volodymyr Iaremchuk (born 1954) is the author, most famously, of the monument to Mykhaĭlo Hrushevs'kyĭ in L'viv. Several Taras Shevchenko monuments of his authorship are installed in provincial towns of western Ukraine. Iaremchuk is also the author of the Stepan Bandera monument in Drohobych.

historic district (Slov''ians'kyĭ Sad, a recreation zone on the site of the former fortress), the monument to St. Volodymyr is supported by statues of the Kyïvan Rus' princes Iaroslav Osmomysl and Iaroslav the Wise, by the same sculptor (fig. 11).

Fig. 11: Monument to St. Volodymyr (in the background) and statues of Kyïvan Rus' princes Iaroslav Osmomysl and Iaroslav the Wise in the city park of Volodymyr-Volyns'kyĭ, Ukraine. © baxys / Shutterstock

This combination of historical personalities refers to the history of the Halych (Galicia) Rus' Principality, one of the main regional states within Kyïvan Rus', which later became the Kingdom of Galicia–Volhynia, one of the successor states of Kyïvan Rus'. Mentioned already in the *Primary Chronicle*,[44] the town was given the name Vladimir-Volynskiĭ when in

[44] This fact is contested by the Russian city Vladimir (formerly Vladimir-on-Kliazma) as it was already mentioned above.

1795 it became part of the Russian Empire as a result of the Third Partition of Poland. In interwar Poland the town was known as Włodzimierz. In 1939, the name Volodymyr-Volyns'kiĭ was restored by the Soviet authorities. Twice in post-Soviet history, in 1998 and in 2016, there were public initiatives aimed at changing the name back to Volodymyr, but to no avail.

Fig. 12: Monument of St. Volodymyr on the territory of the Assumption Monastery at the Holy Mountain in Zymne, Volodymyr-Volyns'kyĭ district, Ukraine. © Association of Orthodox Journalists, available at https://spzh.news/ru/news/52687-predstojately-upc-nachal-vizit-v-zapadnyje-jeparkhii-s-zimnenskogo-monastyrya (last visited 11 August 2020).

The second St. Volodymyr statue can be found just some kilometres from Volodymyr-Volyns'kiĭ, on the territory of the female monastery in the village of Zymne (fig. 12). The Uspens'kyĭ Sviatohirs'kyĭ Monastery (in English, the Assumption Monastery at the Holy Mountain) belongs to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) and is one of the oldest in Ukraine. A monastic legend attributes its foundation to Vladimir the Great. This explains the construction of the statue of St. Volodymyr in 2001, on the occasion of the monastery's Millennium. In 2009, the monastery was visited by the Russian Patriarch Kirill, who took part in prayers to St. Vladimir in front of the statue.[45] The monastery is frequently visited by top Ukrainian politicians (it has a helipad and a VIP hotel); in the Ukrainian media it has been associated with Viktor Yanukovych and with pro-Russian politicians. In an interview soon after the election of Yanukovych, Mother Superior Stefana also admitted her close personal relationships with notorious pro-Russian politicians such as Viktor Medvedchuk and Iuriĭ Boĭko.[46]

Another monument to St. Volodymyr was created in 2010 in the village of Bilohorodka, twenty-two kilometres from Kyïv. Historians consider it the original "White Town" mentioned in the *Primary Chronicle* – a reference which was erroneously used by the Russian Belgorod to legitimize its 'Millennium'. The emblem of the village proudly presents 980 as the year when Bilhorod-Kyïvs'kyĭ – the legendary city-castle of the Kyïvan Rus' – was first mentioned in historical sources. The remnants of the ancient castle near Bilohorodka is an important archaeological site.

One more example of the local monumental commemoration of St. Volodymyr can be found in Lanivtsi (Ternopil' Oblast'). The statue was erected on the central square (where Lenin had stood before) in 2001, when Lanivtsi village was given the status of a town. Since then, the monument serves in public celebrations of the 'Day of the City', which coincides with St. Volodymyr's Day according to the Orthodox calendar. The statue is designed by the Ternopil' sculptor Vasyl' Sadovnyk (1934–2005) who created several monuments in the region. His other work, a monument to Fighters for the Freedom of Ukraine (a reference

[45] 'Predstoiatel' Russkoĭ pravoslavnoĭ tserkvi pobyval v Zimnenskom Uspenskom Zhenskom Monastyre', available at http://pravoslavie.ru/31443.html (last visited 24 October 2019).

[46] Religious Information Service of Ukraine (RISU), 'Ihumen'ia Stefana. President nachal svoĭ put' s Kievo-Pecherskoĭ Lavry', 23 March 2010, available at https://risu.org.ua/ua/index/monitoring/kaleido_digest/34963/ (last visited 24 October 2019).

to the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) which was active in the area) was the first monument built in Lanivtsi after 1991.

In Liubech (Chernihiv Oblast'), a small ancient town, according to legend considered the birthplace of Malusha, Volodymyr's mother, one finds an unconventional sculpture of Malusha with the infant Volodymyr (fig. 13). It was created in 2011 by the young Ukrainian sculptor Mykyta Zigura (born 1984 in Dnipropetrovs'k).

Fig. 13: Sculpture of infant Volodymyr with his mother Malusha in Liubech, Chernihiv Oblast', Ukraine. © Kiyanka, available at https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Файл:Пам'ятник_Малуші_з_Володимиром._Скульптор-М._Зігура_м.Любеч_01.JPG (last visited 11 August 2020).

Another monument to Malusha and her son Vladimir (as an adolescent)[47] can be found in the local park in Korosten' (Zhytomyr Oblast') (fig. 14). The monument was built in 2010 and sponsored, according to official information, "by a private individual from Korosten' who now lives in

[47] In Pskov (Russia) one can find another sculpture of an infant Vladimir, in this case with his grandmother princess Olga. The monument was created by the already mentioned Viacheslav Klykov and inaugurated in 2003.

Russia".[48] Today's Korosten' (known in the chronicles as Iskorosten', the capital of the ancient East Slavic tribe of the Drevlians) possesses several statues referring to its distant past. These include Mal, the legendary prince of the Drevlians, as well as, paradoxically, the Kyïvan Princess Ol'ha who according to legend burnt Iskorosten' down in revenge for the murder of her husband Prince Ihor.

Fig. 14: Sculpture of young Volodymyr with his mother Malusha in Korosten', Zhytomyr Oblast', Ukraine. © Shidlovski / Shutterstock

In 2015, Korosten' received one more monument, this time a rather conventional St. Volodymyr, by the local sculptors Vitaliĭ Rozhyk and Vasyl' Feshchenko (fig. 15).

Finally, one more monument to St. Volodymyr, erected in Kyïv, deserves a mention. It is called *Prince Volodymyr the Great Chooses His Faith* and consists of four bronze figures: Prince Volodymyr sitting on his throne, his eyes turned towards an Orthodox priest, and the two rejected representatives of Islam and Judaism standing on the other side (fig. 16). The monument by the Kyïv sculptor Petro Hlemiaz' is situated in a park which belongs to the Interregional Academy for Personnel Management

[48] 'U Korosteni vidkryiut' pam''iatnyk kliuchnytsi Malushi, vartistiu 50 tys. dolariv', *Novyny Zhytomyra*, 9 June 2010, available at http://news.city.zt.ua/kyltyra/1749-u-korosteni-vidkriyut-pamyatnik-klyuchnici-malushi.html (last visited 24 October 2019).

Fig. 15: Monument to St. Volodymyr in the city park of Korosten', Zhytomyr Oblast', Ukraine. © Shidlovski / Shutterstock

Fig. 16: The monument *Prince Volodymyr the Great Chooses His Faith* on the territory of the MAUP in Kyïv. © Igor Turzh, available at https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Файл:Пам'ятник_Князь_Володимир_обирає_віру_МАУП_Київ.JPG (last visited 11 August 2020).

(known by its Ukrainian acronym MAUP). Like many other statues in the park, the St. Volodymyr monument was commissioned by the MAUP, a private university, notoriously known in Ukraine and beyond for its xenophobic and anti-semitic conferences and publications.[49] Public scandals around MAUP reached a peak in the 2000s, and President Viktor Yushchenko and Foreign Minister Borys Tarasiuk had to distance themselves officially from this institution. In 2006, the founder of MAUP created his own political party whose ideology was defined as 'national conservatism', but his political project failed. The inauguration of the monument in 2002 was attended by Metropolitan Volodymyr of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) who consecrated it and received a small replica as a personal gift from the rector.

An interesting detail is worth mentioning: the event also included the laying of a foundation stone for the future Chapel of the Serbian Orthodox Church in memory of the victims of the NATO bombing of Serbia. This sheds a specific light on the monument to St. Volodymyr which makes it look like a particular political project – far right, anti-Western, and nationalist. And yet, one should be cautious not to overinterpret it – the MAUP park is rather an eclectic collection of everything possible, from the Heydar Aliyev statue mentioned above to the collection of ancient Trypillian art and from models of the Seven Wonders of the World to the gallery of Ukrainian poets and writers. St. Volodymyr appears in this context rather as the protagonist in a historical anecdote.

2.5. The Annexation of Crimea and the Russian–Ukrainian Conflict

The annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and the subsequent Russian–Ukrainian conflict has dramatically changed the political context of the cult of monuments to St. Vladimir / St. Volodymyr in both countries. Rather than being a symbol of East Slavic unity and common Orthodox faith, St. Vladimir has been deployed in the new culture wars by Russia denying Ukraine's separate historical identity and Ukraine claiming Kyïvan Rus' for itself.

Most importantly, however, the baptism of Vladimir in the Greek colony of Chersonesos (Ukrainian and Russian Korsun'), today on the

[49] Per Anders Rudling, 'Anti-Semitism on the Curriculum: MAUP – The Interregional Academy for Personnel Management', in *Doublespeak: The Rhetoric of the Far Right since 1945*, eds. Matthew Feldman and Paul Jackson (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2014), 247–70.

territory of Sevastopol', and thus the role of Crimea in the Christianization of Rus', was used by president Putin to justify Russia's historical claim on the peninsula. The Korsun' legend, something of interest mainly for professional historians, was instrumentalized for Russia's territorial expansionism. (In fact, this was happening for the second time in Russian history – the legend of Prince Vladimir's conversion in Korsun' had acquired a special significance already after Russia's conquest of Crimea in 1783.)[50]

In 2015, the first anniversary of the annexation of Crimea coincided with the Millennium of Prince Vladimir's death, marking a new wave of highly political monumental commemorations of St. Vladimir. The scale of the official celebrations in summer 2015 testifies to the political dimension of the issue: an ambitious programme combined cultural and religious events all over European Russia, culminating with a pop concert on Red Square in Moscow.[51] The geography of the celebrations included the newly-acquired Crimea: an Orthodox procession started in Sevastopol' in order to pass through Krasnodar, Rostov, Voronezh, Belgorod, Kursk, Briansk, and Smolensk. In this way, the new political geography of Russia including Crimea (but omitting Kyïv and other Ukrainian cities) was performed and celebrated in a public religious spectacle centred around St. Vladimir.

As part of the celebrations, a new monument to Vladimir was inaugurated in summer 2015 in Smolensk. The statue, created by the local sculptor Valeriĭ Grashchenkov, shows Vladimir with a cross held to his chest and extending his right hand towards the Dnipro River. (The embankment of the Dnipro where the monument is situated was also re-named after St. Vladimir.) The monument was consecrated by Patriarch Kirill during a festive inauguration ceremony starting with a liturgy and ending with a pop concert. The special significance of Smolensk (the River Dnipro where Prince Vladimir baptized his people originates in the Smolensk Oblast') was frequently underlined, as for example by the President's special envoy in the Central Federal District, Aleksandr Beglov: "We all are heirs of Prince Vladimir. This is the first monument in Russia to Prince Vladimir on the Dnipro and it is great that it was

[50] Mara Kozelsky, 'Ruins into Relics: The Monument to Saint Vladimir on the Excavations of Chersonesos, 1827–57', *The Russian Review* 63, 4 (2004): 655–72.

[51] 'Kniaziu ot prezidenta. Na torzhestva v chest' sviatogo kniazia Vladimira potratiat bolee 1 milliarda rubleĭ', 22 May 2015, available at https://www.rbc.ru/newspaper/2015/05/22/56bcd7759a7947299f72bfc2 (last visited 24 October 2019).

erected at its origins".[52] The legend that Prince Vladimir himself baptized the citizens of Smolensk on his way from Kyïv to Novgorod, although not grounded in any historical evidence, was often referred to in the context of the celebrations. Smolensk, the only big Russian city on the Dnipro, thus symbolically replaced Kyïv in the imagined geography of Russian 'sacred lands'.

The inauguration of the monument to St. Vladimir in Moscow (fig. 17) was also planned for the Millennium of his death in 2015 but took place one year later. The plan to erect a monument to St. Vladimir in Moscow goes back to 2013, when Putin ordered the establishment of a working group to prepare for the Millennium of the prince's death.

Fig. 17: Monument to St. Vladimir near the Kremlin's Borovitskie Gates, Moscow. © Andrey Zaginaylov / Dreamstime.com

In 2014 the working group, with the addition of representatives from Crimea and from the Russian Military-Historical Society (*Rossiĭskoe voenno-istoricheskoe obshchestvo*, RVIO), came up with the idea of a monument. Since its establishment in 2012, the RVIO has become an important mnemonic actor in Russian politics. Created by presidential decree to replicate the Imperial Russian Military-Historical Society (1907–17), it is meant to

[52] 'V Smolenske otkryt pamiatnik kniaziu Vladimiru', *Smolenskaia Gazeta*, 30 August 2015, available at https://smolgazeta.ru/daylynews/23148-v-smolenske-otkryt-pamyatnik-knyazyu-vladimiru.html (last visited 24 October 2019).

> "consolidate the forces of state and society in the study of the military history of Russia, to promote the study of Russian military history and counter attempts at distortion, ensuring the popularization of the achievements of military-historical scholarship, of patriotism, and of raising the prestige of military service".[53]

The web site of the RVIO mentions "Monumental Propaganda" among its main activities, and indeed, since 2012, the Society has erected more than 250 monuments in Russia and abroad.[54]

Headed by the notoriously conservative minister of culture Vladimir Medinskiĭ, the Society includes top-level officials, businessmen, and prominent representatives of the cultural elite loyal to Putin. According to Russian media, the idea of a St. Vladimir monument in Moscow was put forward by an initiative group including such notorious figures as the leader of the Night Wolves Motorcycle Club, Aleksandr Zaldostanov, and Archimandrite Tikhon (Shevkunov), rumoured to be Putin's confessor. The latter headed the commission which selected the winning project.

The winner came as no surprise – Salavat Shcherbakov (born 1955) has already created several politically significant projects such as the monument to Pëtr Stolypin inaugurated in the presence of Putin and Medvedev in 2012. The project was under the personal control of Putin, who likes to see himself as a successor of the reform-minded imperial Russian minister. According to media sources, Shcherbakov, due to his good contacts with Vladimir Medinskiĭ and to the influential conservative artist Il'ia Glazunov, was entrusted with a leading role in implementing the "Monumental Propaganda" programme of the Russian Military-Historical Society.[55]

Shcherbakov, who started his career as a non-conformist avantgarde sculptor, thus turned to a historicist style which suits the taste of Putin's elite. Even more prolific than the notorious Zurab Tsereteli, Shcherbakov has meanwhile been commissioned to create such politically important monuments in central Moscow as the statue of Tsar Alexander I, the monument to the inventor of the legendary Soviet machine gun Mikhail

[53] See the RVIO website: https://rvio.histrf.ru/officially/ukaz-1710 (last visited 22 July 2020).

[54] RVIO website, https://rvio.histrf.ru/activities/monumentalnaya-propaganda (last visited 22 July 2020).

[55] Kseniia Leonova. 'Uchenik avangardista, liubimchik ministra. Kak byvshiĭ nonkonformist Salavat Shcherbakov stal glavnym ofitsial'nym skul'ptorom Rossii', *Meduza*, 20 December 2017, available at https://meduza.io/feature/2017/12/20/uchenik-avangardista-lyubimchik-ministra (last visited 24 October 2019).

Kalashnikov, and the statue of Patriarch Germogen (presumably born 1530, died 1612) who inspired the popular uprising against the Poles which put an end to the Time of Troubles (in Russian *Smuta*).

Plans for the monument to St. Vladimir caused lively public debate. One of the reasons was the controversy over the location: the original site envisaged by those who had initiated the idea was the observation platform near Moscow State University (MGU) at Vorob'ëvy Gory (Sparrow Hills), a hill on the right bank of the Moskva River and one of the highest points in the Russian capital. This location would have made an implicit reference to the original St. Vladimir in Kyïv. The inhabitants of the Ramenki District as well as professors and students from MGU protested against the project, referring to security risks (landslide) and the protection of the architectural heritage. While the city of Moscow had nevertheless approved the plan, despite the fact that its implementation promised to be technically too complicated and therefore rather expensive, the initiators – from the Russian Military-Historical Society – suggested an alternative, no less prominent location – in the heart of Moscow, near the Borovitskie Gates of the Kremlin.[56] It was at this site that the monument was then erected and finally inaugurated on the Day of People's Unity on 4 November 2016, in presence of President Putin and Prime Minister Medvedev, Patriarch Kirill, representatives of other confessions, the Minister of Culture and Head of the RVIO, Medinskiĭ, the Mayor of Moscow, Sobianin, and other symbolic individuals such as the widow of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. The inauguration ceremony of the 17.5 m statue[57] on the 'Day of People's Unity' was supposed to demonstrate the political consolidation of the Russian people around its leadership, interconfessional harmony, and the unity of the state with the Russian Orthodox Church. St. Vladimir is the best suited for this package of political purposes – according to Putin's speech he is "our outstanding ancestor, a particularly revered saint, statesman and warrior, and the spiritual founder of the Russian state".[58]

[56] 'RVIO prosit izmenit' mesto ustanovki pamiatnika kniaziu Vladimiru', 9 June 2015, available at https://www.colta.ru/news/7597-rvio-prosit-izmenit-mesto-ustanovki-pamyatnika-knyazyu-vladimiru (last visited 24 October 2019).

[57] The planned monument on Vorob'ëvy Gory was supposed to be 24 meter high – this would make it the highest Vladimir in the world. The monument installed on Borovitskiĭ Square is lower than the monument in Kyïv, but the statue itself, without the plinth, is the biggest among all other Vladimirs.

[58] RVIO website, https://rvio.histrf.ru/activities/monumentalnaya-propaganda/monument-96 (last visited 22 July 2020).

The meaning of the new monument was of course inscribed into the political discourse of post-Crimean Russia. According to Russian historian Nikolaĭ Svanidze, Putin wanted to draw a parallel between Prince Vladimir and himself:

> "Prince Vladimir was baptized in Crimea, and Putin 'returned' Crimea to Russia. This parallel should raise Putin's role in the eyes of his contemporaries and ancestors, and sanctify the re-joining of Crimea to Russia."

Political scientist Alekseĭ Makarkin also saw the celebrations as an additional legitimization of Crimea's return to Russia as it sacralized this place which had played such an important role in the Christianization of Russia:

> "Prince Vladimir is a consensus figure for both the state and the church. He is considered the great prince who stopped internal conflicts and strengthened the state, and at the same time one of the most revered saints."[59]

As underscored by the Ukrainian Harvard historian Serhii Plokhy, "more than anything else the monument symbolizes the Russian claim for Kyïvan heritage and underlines the importance of Kyïvan Rus' for the historical identity of contemporary Russia".[60] The message of the St. Vladimir statue, according to the *Kyïv Post*,

> "is consistent with the propaganda narrative that the Kremlin has maintained since it annexed Crimea and launched its war on Ukraine in the Donbas in 2014 – the people of Ukraine and Russia are 'one people' (a phrase Putin has used many times) and so Ukraine is not really an independent, sovereign state, but an unruly lost province temporarily out of Moscow's direct control".[61]

It is this aspect of the new St. Vladimir monument in Moscow which caused most resonance in Ukraine where it was perceived as an attempt to steal Ukrainian history.[62] President Poroshenko, at the inauguration of

[59] Both citations from: 'Kniaziu ot presidenta' (see note 52).

[60] Plokhy, *Lost Kingdom* (see note 1), VIII.

[61] Euan MacDonald, 'Honest History 1: How Kremlin Falsifies History of Kyïvan Rus to Undermine Ukrainian Statehood', *Kyïv Post*, 2 March 2018, available https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/honest-history-episode-1-kremlin-uses-history-Kyivan-rus-distort-past-undermine-ukrainian-statehood.html?cn-reloaded=1 (last visited 24 October 2019).

[62] Vasyl' Iavir, 'Volodymyr Sviatyĭ: Chyïkh budesh?', *Commons*, 23 January 2017, available at https://commons.com.ua/uk/volodimir-svyatij-chih-budesh-chastina-1-aktsiya/; https://commons.com.ua/uk/volodimir-svyatij-chih-budesh-chastina-2-reaktsiya/ (last visited 24 October 2019).

the monument to the Ukrainian philosopher Hryhoriĭ Skovoroda in Ljubljana, mentioned "another monument":

> "In the Kremlin near the unburied Vladimir Lenin they inaugurated a monument to our Kyïvan Prince Volodymyr. This is one more attempt at the hybrid appropriation of history."[63]

The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) tweeted on 4 November 2016:

> "Don't forget what the real Prince Volodymyr monument looks like. Kyïv brought Orthodox Christianity to the Rus. Kind reminder to @Russia."[64]

The Russian MFA tweeted back:

> "Kind reminder to @Ukraine: Prince Vladimir / Volodymyr united our people through Orthodoxy while you're abusing it spreading hatred among us."[65]

Ukrainian social media responded with memes about Prince Volodymyr being lost in Moscow, a city founded more than a century after his death; others joked that after Volodymyr, one could expect other monuments to prominent Ukrainians – Ivan Mazepa or even Stepan Bandera – to emerge in the Russian capital.[66]

While Ukrainian officials and media keep insisting on the authenticity and singularity of Kyïv's St. Volodymyr, another monument to Volodymyr outside Ukraine was erected in the Polish city of Gdańsk in 2015 (fig. 18). It was initiated by a local Greek Catholic priest and made by the Ukrainian-Polish sculptor Giennadij Jerszow, known for his statues of Taras Shevchenko, Ivan Mazepa, the composer Frédéric Chopin, and the former Polish President Lech Wałęsa. Erected near the local Greek Catho-

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[63] 'Poroshenko nazvav vidkryttia pam'iatnyka kniaziu Volodymyru v Moskvi sproboiu hibrydnoho pryvlasnennia istorii', *UNIAN*, 8 November 2016, available at https://www.unian.ua/society/1612661-poroshenko-nazvav-vidkrittya-pamyatnika-knyazyu-volodimiru-v-moskvi-sproboyu-gibridnogo-privlasnennya-istoriji.html (last visited 24 October 2019).

[64] Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Twitter (@Ukraine), 4 November 2016, 11:37 a.m., available at https://twitter.com/ukraine/status/794488777838305281?lang=de (last visited 3 August 2020).

[65] Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Twitter (@Russia), 5 November 2016, 9:25 a.m., available at https://twitter.com/russia/status/794817949295144960 (last visitied 3 August 2020).

[66] 'Kniaz' Volodymyr vzhe v Moskvi, na cherzi Mazepa i Bandera – sotsmerezhi', *Radio Svoboda*, 4 November 2016, available at https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/ 28097586.html (last visited 24 October 2019).

lic Church, the monument, according to the Bishop of the Eparchy of Wrocław–Gdańsk, Włodzimierz Juszczak, is meant to appeal to all Ukrainians living in Poland and remind them of their roots. He emphasized the symbolic meaning of the monument for the Ukrainians scattered over Poland by Operation Vistula, as well as for the labour migrants and refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine.[67]

Fig. 18: Inauguration of the statue of St. Volodymyr in Gdańsk, Poland, 23 May 2015. © Grzegorz Spodarek / Nasz Wybir, available at https://naszwybir.pl/u-gdansku-vidkrito-pam-yatnik-knyazyu-volodimiru/ (last visited 11 August 2020), photo detail.

Prince Volodymyr (in Polish Włodzimierz) holds a cross in one hand and a church in the other and is thus represented as baptizer rather than warrior. The plinth bears inscriptions in Ukrainian, Polish, English, and German about "St. Vladimir the Great ... Co-Founder of Christian Eu-

[67] Paweł Łoza, 'U Gdans'ku vidkryto pam''iatnyk kniaziu Volodymyru', *Nash Vybir*, 28 May 2015, available at https://naszwybir.pl/u-gdansku-vidkrito-pam-yatnik-knyazyu-volodimiru/ (last visited 24 October 2019).

rope". The inauguration was attended by the Mayor of Gdańsk, Paweł Adamowicz, the Marshal of the Polish Senate, Bogdan Borusewicz, the member of the Polish Sejm and head of the Sejm commission on national minorities, the Ukrainian activist Miron Sycz, the Head of the Association of Ukrainians in Poland, Petro Tyma, and representatives of the Ukrainian embassy.

Against the backdrop of the current Polish–Ukrainian 'memory wars' and the ongoing conflict in the Donbas the inauguration of the monument to St. Volodymyr symbolized the reconciliation and the unity of Christian East and West and the hope for peace in Ukraine. As both Poles and Ukrainians gathered for the inauguration, the monument proved the 'openness' of the Hanseatic city of Gdańsk and some speakers found it telling that Volodymyr who was baptized in Crimea found his place on the Baltic coast. In this way, the title of the report "Volodymyr from Sea to Sea" published in the monthly newsletter of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in Poland suggested a symbolic geography quite different from the Russian one.[68]

Somewhat different again is the local political context of the newest monument to St. Volodymyr, inaugurated in the Ukrainian industrial city of Kryvyĭ Rih (Dnipro Oblast') in September 2018, on the occasion of the 1030th anniversary of the Christianization of Rus'. According to local media, the monument was created on the initiative and with the personal support of the Mayor, Iuriĭ Vilkul. A member of the Oppositional Block and before that of the Party of Regions, Vilkul won the mayoral elections 2015 in a hard-fought competition with a candidate from the Samopomich Party: the results were contested but Vilkul was able to repeat his success in the 2016 snap election.

In his speech at the inauguration of the monument the mayor stressed that

> "despite the extremely difficult situation in the country, Kryvyĭ Rih is developing into a comfortable European city. While we modernize our city, we respect and preserve its history, keep our national traditions, and transfer them from generation to generation."

[68] Bohdan Tkhir, 'Volodymyr vid moria do moria', *Blahovist. Misiachnyk Ukraïns'koï Hreko-Katolyts'koï Tserkvy v Pol'shchi* XXIV, 6 (294) (2015): 1, 3, 10, available at http://cerkiew.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/blahowist-2015.06.pdf (last visited 24 October 2019).

The monument to the great prince, the mayor stated, is "the spiritual and state symbol of Ukraine in Kryvyĭ Rih".[69] The statue of St. Vladimir was sponsored by "private business" and erected on the site of the former Soviet monument to the Bolshevik leader Artëm, which in 2015 had fallen victim to Ukraine's decommunization policy. Thus, Prince Volodymyr came to fill the gap (and the empty plinth) left by revolutionary symbolic politics. Bearing in mind the recent ideological polarization in the country this was obviously the best choice from the perspective of a mayor in charge of a big, largely Russian speaking Ukrainian industrial city in the South: a historical symbol which is patriotic enough, but not nationalist, and refers to national traditions, to Europe and to Orthodox Christianity simultaneously. References to Russia were strikingly absent – the monument and the event were Ukraine-centric. Rather, the media emphasized the size of the monument: with a height of 22 meters it was claimed to be the highest not only in Ukraine but in all Europe.

Conclusion

Grand Prince Volodymyr / Vladimir is a key historical symbol for both Ukraine and Russia because he marks the origins of statehood and cultural identity of both nations. The meaning of this symbol has been, however, fluid and ambivalent. St. Volodymyr / St. Vladimir and his monuments can be interpreted in a number of historically and politically changing contexts: Russian imperial control over Right Bank Ukraine, Ukrainian–Russian 'brotherhood', the revival of the Orthodox Church after the collapse of Communism, post-Soviet nation building, decommunization of the urban landscape, and the current Ukrainian–Russian culture wars.

The proliferation of monuments to him in the post-Soviet era must be seen against the background of the nationalization of history and myth-making in Ukraine and Russia, who both lay claims to Kyïvan Rus'. For contemporary Russia, St. Vladimir is at the origins of a 'thousand-year-old great Russian state' and a unique Orthodox civilization; for Ukraine, St. Volodymyr is proof of Ukraine's separate historical identity and

[69] 'V Krivom Roge otkryt samyĭ vysokiĭ v Evrope pamiatnik Vladimiru Velikomu', *Krivoĭ Rog Life*, 27 September 2018, available at http://krlife.com.ua/news/v-krivom-roge-otkryt-samyi-vysokii-v-evrope-pamyatnik-vladimiru-velikomu-foto (last visited 24 October 2019).

symbolizes the geopolitical choice in favour of Christian Europe. Most of the monuments to St. Volodymyr / St. Vladimir are, however, local projects motivated by traditionalist cultural politics, local branding, and the development of tourism. They are initiated and supported by a broad coalition of actors, including local authorities, business, historians and journalists, and the Orthodox Church. Often, various church-affiliated conservative groups and 'Orthodox sculptors' are the initiators of such monuments.

While statues of saints and their veneration is not part of the Orthodox canon which focuses instead on icons and frescoes, the legacy of Soviet monumental art, even if not explicitly recognized, has contributed to the invention of a new tradition. Orthodox 'monumental propaganda' integrated into the annual celebration of the Day of the Christianization of Rus' is symptomatic of the post-Soviet Russian state's relationship with the Orthodox Church. In Ukraine, with its more pluralistic confessional landscape, St. Volodymyr often appears as an ecumenical symbol accepted by both the Greek Catholic and the Orthodox Church. The proliferation of St. Vladimir monuments also testifies to the re-bordering of Ukraine and Russia after 1991 and in particular to the painful process of adjusting the imaginary memoryscape of Kyïvan Rus' to Russia's post-Soviet state borders.