

## Article One: A Linguistic Approach

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Résumé de l'article

An English-language translation of an article authored by Iurii Shevel'ov (George Y. Shevelov) on the origins of the Ukrainian language.



# Article One: A Linguistic Approach

Iurii Shevel'ov (George Y. Shevelov)

*Translated from the Ukrainian by Andrii Zhemakovs'kyi*

## I

**I**n 1913 in Vienna, Stepan Smal'-Stots'kyi (Stephan von Smal-Stockyj) published the book *Grammatik der ruthenischen (ukrainischen) Sprache* (*Grammar of the Ruthenian [Ukrainian] Language*), together with Theodor Gartner.<sup>1</sup> Today, one could celebrate this publication's eightieth anniversary. During those [early] years, hardly any book in Slavic linguistics—and especially Ukrainian linguistics—generated such a flurry of feedback (and consistently negative to boot) like this one did. A list of such reviews ([albeit] incomplete) is given in L. Chervins'ka and A. Dykyi's work (see *Pokazhchyk* 152, 252). We can also add to this list reviews of a similar nature by Tadeusz

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[This text is a translation into the English of an article by Iurii Shevel'ov (George Y. Shevelov) titled "Stattia persha, movoznavcha," in the publication *Chomu obshcherusskii iazyk, a ne vibchorus'ka mova? Z problem skhidnoslov'ians'koï hlotohonii; Dvi staty pro postannia ukrains'koï movy* (*Why Obshcherusskii iazyk and Not Vibchorus'ka mova? On the Problems of East Slavic Glottogony; Two Articles on the Emergence of the Ukrainian Language* [see Shevel'ov, *Chomu obshcherusskii iazyk* 3–19]).

Explanatory additions and notes for this translation have been provided by the translator and/or by *EWJUS* managing editor Tania Plawuszczak-Stech and are given in square brackets; the respective identifiers *Trans.* and/or *Ed.* appear at the end of more substantial notations. Tania Plawuszczak-Stech has done a verification and substantive final edit of this translation into the English. There are some unmarked changes in the translated text in relation to the original: Names and bibliographic information have been added/amended/amplified where necessary. Bibliographic data in the main body of the text, in-text citations, and entries in the "Works Cited" section has been formatted according to the MLA, as per the *EWJUS* style guidelines; English-language translations of titles have been added where appropriate. And occasionally, Shevel'ov's main-body narrative has been transferred to a footnote in the translation for the sake of readability (in cases where the main body of the text is overly cluttered).—Ed.]

<sup>1</sup> [Shevel'ov considered Smal'-Stots'kyi to be the primary author of the book and at the spearhead of the analytical process therein.—Ed.]

Lehr-Splawiński, in *Rocznik Slawistyczny / Revue slavistique* (*Slavic Annual* [Kraków]), and Vatroslav Jagić, in *Archiv für slavische Philologie* (*Archive for Slavic Philology* [Berlin]). Chronologically, Aleksei Shakhmatov (Oleksii Shakhmatov) led off the denunciatory charge in 1914 [see Shakhmatov, “Do pytannia]. It was not [Smal'-Stots'kyi and Gartner's] entire book, though, that attracted such negative criticism from Shakhmatov and the international scholarly community. It was only the final chapter, titled “Die Stellung des Ruthenischen innerhalb der slawischen Sprachen” (“The Position of Ruthenian among the Slavic Languages”),<sup>2</sup> [that caused disgruntlement]—that is, forty pages out of a total [of nearly] five hundred pages [of the main text]! The other [nearly] 460 pages,<sup>3</sup> devoted to a description of the modern Ukrainian language, did not unsettle the scholarly heavyweights. With forty pages of text slicing in a single stroke, Smal'-Stots'kyi gained the reputation of a Herostratus in Slavic studies. This was because in the chapter, he denies the existence of a common Old Rus' (that is, a common East Slavic) language, [instead] deriving the Ukrainian language directly from the Proto-Slavic language and asserting that it was closer to the Serbian language (in this, partially aligning with Pëtr Lavrovskii) than to the Russian language (Hlushchenko 19). According to the authors of the book [Smal'-Stots'kyi and Gartner], the Ukrainian language has eleven features in common with the Russian language versus thirteen elements in common with the Serbian. Thus, the authors were going against the generally accepted canon in Slavic studies at the time of an original unity of the three East Slavic languages. The condemnation of Smal'-Stots'kyi's book and theory was so consistent across the board that it gave the impression of being an orchestra united in song and led by a lone, invisible conductor—although all of the evidence indicates that this [eruption of broad] dissatisfaction was spontaneous. Smal'-Stots'kyi was once and for all removed from the station of “serious scholars.” Even years later, he continued to be blacklisted by leading scholarly journals and publishers. Only Ukrainian (mostly Lviv) periodicals printed his works, and occasionally, the Prague-based *Slavia: Časopis pro slovanskou filologii* (*Slavia: Journal for Slavic Philology*) did as well. The general belief was that he was “distorting” scholarship for political reasons.

It is difficult to ascertain whether Smal'-Stots'kyi's critics were all free of conscious or subconscious political motivations; and perhaps it is not necessary to try to do so. The fact remains that Smal'-Stots'kyi's theory as outlined in his grammar book is methodologically deficient, and he does not

<sup>2</sup> [See Smal'-Stots'kyi and Gartner 455–95.—Ed.]

<sup>3</sup> [I.e., 457 pages of the main text, to be exact. When one includes the front and end matter, the book is 567 pages long in total.—Ed.]

confirm his thesis. Randomly chosen statistics on lingual features taken without consideration of the time of the emergence of such elements or the territory of their expansion cannot have probative value in the reconstruction of historical facts or create sufficient grounds for convincing the experts. After Smal'-Stots'kyi's defeat, the view of the dual-stage development of the East Slavic languages—from Proto-Slavic to Old Rus' and then to Ukrainian (alongside the Belarusian and the Russian)—dominated without objections. And from the 1930s, in the USSR, it was a requisite official dogma. Today, the anniversary of Smal'-Stots'kyi's venture does not mark a revolution in historical Slavic-Ukrainian studies, but rather merely an attempt at a revolution—although to be honest, the manoeuvres of his opponents were not entirely legitimate. To not prove something does not mean to prove the opposite—but this was precisely how the situation was interpreted. In this case, it was not proven that the Old Rus' language had not existed; but this does not provide confirmation that it had existed. But this is exactly how Smal'-Stots'kyi's defeat has been construed in Slavic studies since 1913. Smal'-Stots'kyi's main opponent, Shakhmatov, began each of his works in this sphere—from the earliest ones to the later ones<sup>4</sup>—in one of two ways: either with a titular term like *obshcherusskii iazyk* ["all-Russian language"] or *épokha obshcherusskogo iazyka* ["era of the all-Russian language"]<sup>5</sup> or with the assertion that the three modern East Slavic languages had their "origin in a *single, undivided* Russian language" (Shakhmatov, *Istoricheskii protsess*" 10; my emphasis).

Years passed, however, and the field of Slavic studies came to be fortified by many new facts. It also became armed with new methods. And the construct of a single Old Rus' language began to quake with mounting frequency and intensity, and it increasingly developed cracks. One of the most ominous occurrences was the emergence of an awareness that contrary to [the precepts of] early Indo-European studies, we are now observing the history of languages, in general—and thus of the East Slavic languages, in particular—not only as processes of differentiation.<sup>6</sup> We see it also as

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<sup>4</sup> E.g., [*Istoricheskii protsess*" obrazovaniia russkikh" plemen" i naréchii (*The Historical Process of the Formation of Russian Tribes and Dialects*)—vol. 1 of] *Vvedenie v" kurs" istorii russkago iazyka* (*Introduction to the Course of the History of the Russian Language*, 1916); in fact, a recapitulatory work.

<sup>5</sup> Cf., e.g., his early work "K" istorii zvukov" russkago iazyka" ("Toward a History of the Sounds of the Russian Language," 1896 [see 714]).

<sup>6</sup> Consider, for example, the chapter headings in Shakhmatov's *Istoricheskii protsess*" "Raspadenie indoeuropeiskoi sem'i" ("The Differentiation of the Indo-European Family"); "Raspadenie Baltiisko-slavianskoi sem'i" ("The Differentiation of the Balto-

historically conditioned trends of integration, redistribution, and so on. (In fact, Shakhmatov himself already knew of unifying processes, such as blending and integration, but he generally relegated them to a time after the differentiation of a still single, common [Old] East Slavic language). The first tangible blows to the concept of “proto-Russian unity” came from Ukrainian scholars (Ievhen Tymchenko, Vsevolod Hantsov, Olena Kurylo, and others). At present, this hypothesis is so full of holes that we hear voices on its antiquatedness and inadequateness even among the Russian Slavists.

We will get into this in more detail later. Now, following these brief remarks, let us shift our attention to the main objective of this presentation—the attempt to outline (at least to provide a structure and general shape to) a system that could be offered today in place of the conventional scheme of the emergence of the Ukrainian language against the background of [the evolution of] other Slavic languages, primarily the East Slavic.

## II

To begin, I list some basic assertions that are decisive in nature but cannot be examined or grounded here in detail and must be entirely or partially accepted axiomatically. To a certain degree, they are advanced and completely/partially discussed in my previous writings (which need not be repeated here). I name only those works among them that, in my opinion, represent important stages in the drive toward truth/comprehensiveness (which is never wholly attainable):

1. *Problems in the Formation of Belorussian*;
2. *A Prehistory of Slavic: The Historical Phonology of Common Slavic*;
3. *A Historical Phonology of the Ukrainian Language*; and
4. “Ukrainian Diphthongs in Publications of the 1980s and in Reality (and Some Adjacent Problems Imaginary and Real).”

The numbers 1–4 plus page numbers are used in subsequent references.<sup>7</sup>

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Slavic Family”); “Raspadenie Iuzhno-vostochnago Slavianstva . . .” (“The Differentiation of South Slavdom . . .”); and “Pervoe razdrobienie russkoi sem'i” (“The First Fragmentation of the Russian Family”) [see 23–25, 27–29, 45–47, and 49–51—Ed.] and also similar phrasings by opponents of Shakhmatov’s ideas, such as Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi.

<sup>7</sup> [We have substituted such references with in-text citations in MLA format.—Ed.]

The axiomatic assertions that I articulate here and have long been using can be grouped into negative statements (1–3) and positive statements (4–9). They follow, with minimal commentary:

- (1) The [Rus'] chronicles<sup>8</sup> mention a whole host of East Slavic tribes, although a complete list of them is not given (compare, for example, Oleg Trubachev's attempt to re-envision the Smoliani tribe, which is not referred to in the chronicles [see Trubachev 137ff.]); some of them are not properly localized geographically. It is possible that originally, the East Slavic tribes (all or a portion) were distinguished by their specific lingual traits. At present, we are unable to reconstruct tribal languages, even if they existed. By the time that the first chronicles were composed, most of the tribes were no longer extant, figuring as historical tradition. The investigation of these tribes as lingual units can only be arbitrary/hypothetical in nature. It is advisable to exclude these arbitrary-hypothetical constructions from the general account of the development of East Slavic lingual units and to not consider them.
- (2) In the modern state of Slavic linguistics, it is impossible to reconstruct any manifestations of lingual development in a given region in the East Slavic space prior to the sixth century. If territorial differences in language development existed among the East Slavs before the sixth century, they were completely erased by later progression. In particular, up to the sixth, or even the seventh, century, we cannot speak of the existence of any specifically Ukrainian lingual traits.
- (3) In relation to point 2, regional archaeological differences up to the sixth century do not reveal any convincing parallels [in the area of] language division. Using them as a guidepost does not inform on lingual processes in the East Slavic territory of that epoch. For a later period, when extensive courses of migration had already taken place or were occurring and in a context where some lingual units had been merged with others, one cannot establish linear correlations between the evolutions of material culture and

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<sup>8</sup> [The chronicles are among the most impressive and premier monuments of historical literature formulated in ancient Rus'. They contain accounts of events plus literary materials, such as stories, legends, biographies, and borrowings from the Byzantine chronicles. According to some scholars, chronicle writing began in Kyiv in the tenth century. Several compilations were also produced throughout the eleventh century (Ohloblyn).—Trans. and Ed.]

language. Therefore, the archaeological data should be handled gingerly, and perhaps it is best not to rely on it at all. These are two, separate developmental lines, and they do not have to coincide with, or offer facts on, each other.

- (4) The history of language formation, in general, and of the Ukrainian language, in particular, involves processes of disintegration (the differentiation of larger lingual units into smaller ones)—but not only. In conventional Indo-European linguistics, which is aimed primarily at the reconstruction of protolanguage predicated on the diversity of later languages, especially historically confirmed and modern ones, these particular processes were assigned principal importance and were even seen as the only viable ones. In reality, however, processes of integration were no less frequent, and they were often foundational. Here, we find the imposition of languages (or dialects) on others; intermixing; blending; unification; regrouping, and so on. Oleksandr Taranenko's term *perechlenuvannia* ["re-memberment"] seems to me less apt (see Taranenko 38).
- (5) Regulating factors in the processes of differentiation and integration included (and include) general historical events, first and foremost colonization and its termination; the creation and dissolution of political entities—their unification, division, or breakup and their social transformation; and trends of stratification within each political body. One cannot formulate a history of language formation and language extinction abstracted from historical facts (processes).
- (6) A new language arises as a result of the prevalence (accumulation) of lingual changes. The rate of the appearance and spread of changes that ultimately lead to the emergence of new languages (lingual units) may vary. In the context of a specified accumulation of such changes within a particular territory combined with the absence of such changes in a neighbouring territory (or territories) at a given juncture, speakers realize the distinctness and self-sufficiency of their language in contrast to the language(s) of other geographically related lingual groups. The newly formed (newly realized) lingual unit (amalgam) is given its own name and thus becomes a language. This stage occurs not only on the linguistic level but also (and mostly) on the socio-psychological level. Staying within the framework of strictly linguistic factors, it is impossible to ascertain *how many* innovative differences are needed in order to be able to firmly assert that a new language has truly emerged.

It is also impossible to determine the inception *date* of the “new” language. Statements like “The Ukrainian language appeared in the sixth century” or “The Ukrainian language arose in the fifteenth century” are ahistorical and, in fact, absurd. As Oleksander Potebnia<sup>9</sup> has written, one can accurately record the date, hour, and minute of when an apple fell from an apple tree or a child was born, but it is impossible to determine the year, day, and time of the advent of a new language (I cite [this point] from memory).

- (7) The appearance of a new language may stem not only from the accumulation of changes within a given lingual unit but also from the accretion of lingual changes in adjacent territories with little to no change in a given territory (in that given lingual unit). If in a specific territory enclosing [three,] adjacent lingual units A, B, and C, units A and C were formed incorporating sufficient changes for the units to become [distinct] languages, then the unchanged unit B would gain the status of a language, even without [itself] having amassed any changes.
- (8) Dialects of a particular language may appear earlier than the language itself. Usually in such cases, innovative dialects become integrated [into a core language] by way of historical (socio-political and so on) processes. There can be (and are) languages possessing several roots—that is, languages where shared dialectal processes unfold individually following their emergence. For example, dialects (lingual units) A and B can merge into a single language C, and some features of the individual units can be retained, forming dialects of the core language; alternately, a complete unification can occur. Shared lingual changes can arise in dialects even after these dialects have already existed as separate lingual units.
- (9) One can (and, of course, should) consider the history of a given language as having started from the incidence of the first change not common with neighbouring lingual units, although admittedly, a single change of this sort does not yet allow us to talk about the existence of a new language. From a terminological viewpoint, such a language in its initial formative phase is best described using the prefix *proto-* ([for example,] “the proto-Ukrainian

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<sup>9</sup> [Potebnia, (1835–91) was a linguist, folklorist, and literary scholar. As a linguist, he specialized in four areas: the philosophy of language; the historical phonetics of East Slavic languages; etymology; and Slavic historical syntax (see Shevelov, “Potebnia”).—Trans.]



language in the sixth century" and so on). In cases where a given language stems from two or multiple dialectal wellsprings, the history of this language incorporates (begins with) those lingual changes that took place in the dialectal components of this language.

### III

I now turn to the concrete question of the formation of the Ukrainian language and its separation from the spectrum of neighbouring Slavic dialects on East Slavic territory. I shall begin by presenting a general scheme of language development on the Eastern European plain east of the Carpathian Mountains and east of the forests on the western banks of the Dnipro River. I shall then flesh out this scheme with the most vital linguistic facts—naturally, bypassing the details (which are by and large discussed in my previous works, in particular in [the aforementioned publications] 1–4, and especially in work 3).

As already stated in axiom 1, the reconstruction of prehistoric tribal Slavic languages in the Eastern European plain, if such languages existed, is impossible today. The earliest stage of development after the period of the prevalence of the Proto-Slavic language that we can regenerate more or less fully and conceivably is the time of the existence of post-tribal lingual-territorial regional units (it would be careless, or even incorrect, to call them languages). The earliest manifestations of their distinctiveness can be dated to the sixth to seventh centuries. At the time of the appearance of the oldest written sources extant today (of the eleventh century), these [regional] units, in the conditions of state formation on the East Slavic plain, were also already a thing of the past; moreover, it is doubtful that in prehistoric times, they reached the level of having been formed into a language, even if we take into account the indefiniteness of the very concept of language. For these reasons, the chronicle as well does not give them names, most often referring to political units—principalities—instead. It is possible to propose provisional names for these lingual-territorial units. The names of cities—centres of prominent principalities—can be taken as the basis of most of them. Two names, Polissia and Podillia, are an exception: they are purely topographic in nature. Lingual and historical facts provide a premise for outlining five such lingual-territorial units/regions. From north to east and south, they are as follows:

1. Novgorod-Tver region (hereafter abbreviated as NT);
2. Polatsk-Smolensk (PS);
3. Murom-Riazan (MR);
4. Kyiv-Polissia (KP); and
5. Galicia-Podillia (GP).

Admittedly, exact boundaries (borders) for these units/regions cannot be drawn. With regard to the genesis of the Ukrainian language, regions 4 and 5 are directly pertinent to this process; region 2 is indirectly in the mix too. Regions 1 and 3 are relevant only by way of contrast.

In the discussion that follows, I will, as a rule, focus only on trends of phonetic change. This offers sufficient material and a foundation for a general introduction. Also, among the various aspects of the language system, phonetics has the advantage in that it operates with the fewest constituent elements; in the case of Slavic languages, the number of phonemes usually does not exceed fifty. At the same time, in morphology, the number of constituent elements is far greater, and in lexicology, it approaches the tens of thousands. Accordingly, phonetic elements are the easiest to compute and quantify, and using them allows for the most accurate results. They are also the best studied.

The prehistoric state ([that is,] prior to recorded history) in our five lingual-territorial regions can be reconstructed with the greatest certainty on the basis of primarily two types of data. First, we have a model of the late-stage Proto-Slavic language, for approximately the sixth to seventh centuries, that has been confirmed with high probability by a mass of research and discussions. Second, conditions can be observed in the oldest preserved written monuments, which in certain cases date to even more ancient times but are abundantly preserved from, and largely studied in relation to, the middle of the eleventh century. Additionally, many monuments from the beginning of the written era can be territorially localized. If in these monuments, a particular phonetic feature appears not as an innovation but as an enduring phenomenon, we can surmise with complete confidence that this feature derives from a time prior to recorded history. Thus, it is with the blending of data from the reconstructed Proto-Slavic language with that of ancient written texts (mostly of the eleventh–twelfth centuries) that one garners information about the state of language and language innovations in their territorial variants in the late period prior to recorded history. (One need not specifically mention the application of dialectal data, as it is assumed.)

The restructuring of the [lingual features of the] original five lingual-territorial regions into the later three East Slavic languages—Ukrainian,

Belarusian, and Russian—began still in the late period prior to recorded history, evolved gradually, and concluded already in times from which we have a wealth of written monuments. In their primordial, unchanged state, none of the original five [lingual-]regional units have survived anywhere, except perhaps for part of the former KP group (regarding this, see below). Very basically and simply, we can hypothesize in this case the existence of several primary trends. The NT group in its western part, and especially in Novgorod itself and its environs, underwent a great many changes on account of the occupation of Novgorod by Moscow and the mass deportation of the local population in the fifteenth century (1478). In ancient times and later, historical circumstances (interrelations among colonizing movements from the south, [that is,] from the MR region, and from the northwest, that is, from NT territory) created conditions for the emergence of the dialectal nucleus of the future Russian language around (the future) Moscow and beyond. Moscow's centralizing role as a political and cultural capital allowed for the consolidation of dialectal synthesis and the spread of this trend northward and eastward, and to some degree southward, especially along the Don River. We can speak of the formation of the Russian language as we understand it today from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. None of these processes had a direct impact on the formation of the Ukrainian language.

The features of the dialects of the PS region—the cradle of [the tendency of] strong “a-ing” (*akannia*)<sup>10</sup>—during the early period of recorded history expanded first eastward and were incorporated into the building of a conglomerate of South Russian dialects that transformed the original strong “a-ing” into a whole host of other types of “a-ing.” Later, however, the eastward expansion of these PS dialects lost steam and to some extent gave way to the Russian language in the lands of the Smolensk region. At the same time, in the south, their enduring encroachment into the northern locus of KP dialects lasted until modern times and was halted perhaps only by the establishment of the modern border between Belarus and Ukraine already in the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> Among the features of the PS dialectal complex, “a-ing” (typically pronounced) was particularly aggressive, and its boosting was greatly (possibly decisively) influenced additionally by political factors (the formation and expansion of the so-called Great Lithuania), and perhaps also

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Shevelov, *Problems* 69ff. [“A-ing” is a phonological phenomenon specific to some Slavic languages, including Belarusian and Russian, where the phonemes *o* or *e* in unstressed syllables are pronounced somewhat like *a*.—Trans. and Ed.]

<sup>11</sup> Such encroachment still continues, but already as a result of political and administrative pressure in the Brest region south of the Iaselda River. [The predominantly Ukrainian-speaking Brest region was incorporated into Belarus.—Ed.]

by intralingual factors—the radical simplification of the system of unstressed vocalism. In consonantism, the automatic softening of consonants before front vowels spread in a similar way. In the formation of the Ukrainian language, a significant role was played by this particular southward expansion of PS-region lingual features, as it blocked the possibility of incorporating [the lingual features of] northern, and even central, Polissia into the future Ukrainian language.

The Ukrainian language is founded upon the GP dialects in synthesis with the southern portion of the KP dialects. As for influential political factors, notable first and foremost were the formation of political centres in Galicia and Volhynia (and in southern Podillia perhaps as well, on the lands of the Ulychians and Tyvertsians) and the subordination [of these centres] to Kyiv, which at certain junctures was a rapidly expanding capital. Essentially, as a result of the gradual expansion of “Lithuanian” (meaning, in fact, proto-Belarusian) features and innovations, on the one hand, and Kyivan-Podillian-Galician ones, on the other hand, the territory of the KP [dialectal] region narrowed both from the south and from the north, eroding the Polissian nucleus. When it became clear that the [lingual features of the] KP region had entered into the (proto-)Belarusian language in the north and the (proto-)Ukrainian language in the south, the self-descriptive term *tutěishyia* (тутэйшыя) emerged at the heart of Polissia dialects—referring to those who were primordially “here” (*tut*) and resisted expansions [coming] from both the north and the south.

The regrouping of the original dialectal regions into the three East Slavic languages can be very simply drawn schematically (see figure 1):

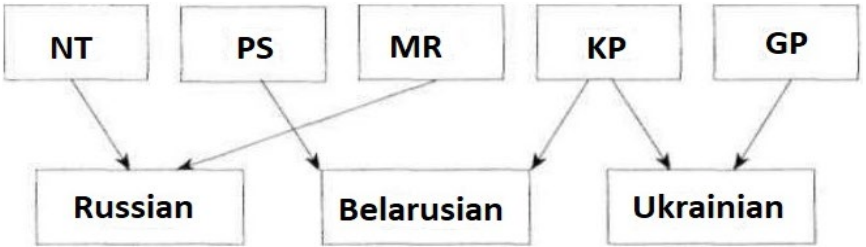


FIGURE 1. | Regrouping of the original dialectal regions into the three East Slavic languages: Russian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian.

One can devise a systematized chronology of the main stages of the formation of the Ukrainian language juxtaposed with specific contemporaneous political events, as follows:

- (a) sixth to seventh centuries—the oldest processes of departure from the Proto-Slavic heritage; the initial emergence of the GP and KP dialectal regions;
- (b) probable (tentative) intermingling of the GP and southern KP features in the territory of southern Volhynia;
- (c) political and lingual expansion of Kyiv to the west and the north;
- (d) by the middle of the thirteenth century—loss of the steppe (Pechenegs, Cumans, and Tatar invasion); later, aggression from the Crimea and devastation of the southern, eastern, and central Ukrainian lands; and
- (e) reconquest [of territory]; blending of dialects to the south and east of Kyiv; and creation of synthetic southeastern dialects in the Cossack lands and, with this, of the centre of the Ukrainian language in the modern sense of the term.

In order for this systematization to be credible, it is necessary to determine which features of the Ukrainian language emerged in the prehistoric and early historical periods. These features underwent a process of creation a thousand—almost fifteen hundred—years ago. It is entirely self-evident that, as a rule, they are buried under later changes. They need to be *excavated* so that they may see the light of day, just as the remains of extinct cultures are unearthed layer by layer by archaeologists. These lingual features must be correlated with contemporaneous phenomena and separated from the features of other epochs. It is necessary to find out whether they originally stemmed from [either] the GP or KP region or whether they were common to both. One must establish their gravity for the structure of language, that is, whether they are secondary (marginal) or central within the language system.

I will name eight such features, without claim to an exhaustive list. This grouping differs from the ones proposed by Shakhmatov (for example, *Istoričeskii protsess*" 15–16) and Smal'-Stots'kyi (466ff.). I will limit my comments to those minimally required, directing [the reader] for more detailed comments to the aforementioned publications 1–4.

- (1) The Proto-Slavic language, already in its stage of decay, eliminated the consonant coupling *+j* (sixth to eighth centuries). Within this series of changes, proto-Ukrainian dialects made one change—namely, [regarding] *d+j*—differently from their neighbours. This is

perhaps the earliest proto-Ukrainian change, and with it, we can commence an overview of the historical phonology of the Ukrainian language. In the later development of Ukrainian dialects, the initial reflex is largely obscured by subsequent changes. The *дж* reflex is presently preserved in its original form in the Boiko and Lemko dialects—[for example,] *ходжу*; *пряджа*. Further east, it is systematically preserved only in fourth-conjugation verbs—[for example,] *ходжу*, but *пряжа*. However, as a relict, *дж* is found in individual words in specific [geographical] areas up to the Vinnytsia–Brest [line] in the east. In most southeastern dialects, the *дж* reflex is also overlaid by the *д'* reflex in verbs, which we see from the middle of the eighteenth century—[for example,] *ходю* (for more details, see Shevelov, *Historical Phonology* 63ff.). One can assume that initially, the change *dj* > *ž* spanned both the GP and KP regions.

- (2) The *kv* reflexes before *ě*<sub>2</sub> in the modern Ukrainian language generally appear as *цв*, but occasionally, we also find *кв*. In the former case, there was a second palatalization of the velar, and in the latter case, there was not—[for example,] *цвѣм–квѣм*; *звізда–звізда*. Based on the territorial distribution of these reflexes, one can surmise that within these consonant groups, the second palatalization did not occur in the KP dialectal region, but in the GP region, it did. The innovation of the GP region created a cordon on the western front, and the conservatism of the KP region induced a separation on the northeastern front (cf. Shevelov, *Historical Phonology* 56).
- (3) In the KP region, the softened *r'* was depalatalized to become *r* prior to the eleventh century (compare *градоуца* in the eleventh-century Vygoleksin Collection and *сѣтвору* in the 1164 Dobrylo Gospel). If the inscription on the tenth-century Gnezdovo *korchaga*<sup>12</sup> is deciphered as *Горун'а*, and it derives from *Горюнъ* (cf. Trubachev 173), which is very likely, we can assume that the depalatalization of *r'* occurred no later than in the tenth century. It was absent in the GP region at that time. In southern Volhynia, it took place in the fifteenth century, and in the Lviv region—at the end of the sixteenth century (cf. Shevelov, *Historical Phonology* 189).
- (4) The denasalization of *ę* to become *'a* occurred in all East Slavic dialects no later than in the middle of the tenth century. But in the

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<sup>12</sup> [*Korchaga*—a large earthenware pot.]

- KP region, it happened only in stressed syllables—[for example,] *пятиуї*, but *пемъ* (with an unsoftened consonant before *e* [cf. Shevelov, *Historical Phonology* 135]). This specific KP feature was not incorporated into the later, standardized Ukrainian language; but compare geographical names, such as *Прунеть* and *Любеч*.
- (5) While the NT, MR, and PS regions introduced the automatic softening of a consonant before a front vowel, the GP and KP [regions] maintained the hardness of consonants before *e* and instituted softening only before *i* and *ě* (cf. Shevelov, *Historical Phonology* 171; Trubachev acknowledges this as a possibility [92]). Palatalized *н'* and *л'* were established in the form of the reflexes *nj* and *lj* [respectively]. In monuments of the GP and KP regions, there was a differentiation of softened and unsoftened *n*; *l* / *n'*; *l'* before *e* up until the end of the twelfth or beginning of the thirteenth century, after which these consonants were [then] also depalatalized. Compare in the 1130 charter of Mstyslav [Volodymyrovych] the two contrasting *n* [sounds] in *угоумене* and *донель*.
  - (6) Long before the written period, the Proto-Slavic *ǫ* before *j* changed not into *ъ*, as in other positions, but into *у*—for example, *миу* and *Киѡ* (compare the Russian dialectal forms of, for instance, *коѣк* in Perm, Viatka, the Urals, and Siberia [Filin 14, 48]). At the same time, *i* before *j* did not change into *ь* but stayed intact; compare with *шия*. (Regarding both changes, see Shevelov, *Historical Phonology* 84, 273ff.)
  - (7) From the absence of traces of a distinguishing of phonologically significant intonations and durations in unstressed, and then also in stressed, syllables (such traces are preserved in many Russian dialects and later monuments), we can draw a tentative conclusion that intonational and durational differences in the [lingual features of the] GP and KP regions—or at least [of] the GP region—were lost in a time prior to recorded history.
  - (8) The period prior to recorded history saw the beginning of the transition of *o* into *i* characteristic of the Ukrainian language, which culminated with the appearance of *i* in the middle of the seventeenth century (and also *e*, with certain restrictions)—with particular distinctness in the GP region. This emergence in the GP region was rooted in an assimilative narrowing before *ǫ* and *ĩ* in the next syllable, which could only have happened before the

transition of these vowels into *ier*y,<sup>13</sup> that is, before the ninth century. Such an ancient date [for this phenomenon] is also suggested by the fact that in the GP region, this narrowing did not depend on stress. In the KP region, where the change consisted of the diphthongization of *o* and depended on the placement of stress [in a word], there is no such clear-cut chronological indicator. The change could have begun in the period prior to recorded history or perhaps much later, at the same time as the decline of the weak *ier*y.<sup>14</sup> It is possible that the difference in the development of *o* (and *e*) was linked (as postulated by Hantsov and Kurylo) with variance in the intonation of stressed vowels in two proto-Ukrainian regions—falling intonation [was present] in the KP [region], and even intonation, in the GP [region].

The data in this concise overview allows us to state that as early as in the late period prior to recorded history, the East Slavic dialects of the southwestern regions evolved into two groups—nominally called here the GP and the KP—which differed developmentally from the lingual units to their north and northeast. The innovations of these two regions formed the basis of the later Ukrainian language, whereas the innovations in the PS and MR regions, which were not adopted by proto-Ukrainian dialects, contributed to a more clear-cut differentiation between the first two lingual regions and the latter two.

This statement is not contradicted by the fact that at the same time, or even later, proto-Ukrainian dialects also embraced innovations in common with other dialectal groups that did not enter into the established Ukrainian language. The most important of these common innovations were pleophony; the denasalization of the nasal vowel *o* to become *u*; and shared changes in the initial syllable of words beginning with *j*, namely, the loss of this *j*- before *u* and *e* [leading to *u*- and *e*-] and in certain cases the transition of *je*- to *o*- ([for example,] *осінь* and so on). The existence of convergent innovations after or alongside divergent ones was entirely natural. If we consider a language to be not [just] an assortment of random features or amorphous but a system where *tout se tient* ["everything fits"], there is

<sup>13</sup> [The term *ier*y ("jer letters," "jer phonemes," or "jers") describes two letters of the Glagolitic and Cyrillic alphabets: ѣ and ѣ in Cyrillic. The letter ѣ is still used in the Ukrainian alphabet—not as a vowel but as a 'softening sign' to indicate palatalization of the preceding consonant (for more, see "Jer").—Ed.]

<sup>14</sup> [The *ier*y became split into weak and strong in accordance with their position in given words. The strong *ier*y developed into *o* and *e*, respectively, while the weak *ier*y declined, subsequently being lost around 1150 (see "Jer").—Ed.]



nothing unusual about the fact that in the further, separate development of distinct parts of the original unified Proto-Slavic language, not only fundamentally new phenomena were produced but also those processes that had had their inception in the original system were completed (we refer here to the carrying through of inherited trends).

In addition, there are two other considerations to keep in mind. [First,] even in those processes that led to seemingly identical results/reflexes, there could be, and often were, divergences on the micro level. Second, identical consequences of changes are not always indicative of a common process. A clear-cut and convincing example from a somewhat later time is the dissipation of weak *ıery* and the transition of strong *ıery* into *o* and *e*. Disregarding the details, these changes look the same in all parts of the East Slavic spectrum. But it is well known that these changes occurred in the south (the GP and KP [regions]) in the middle of the twelfth century and in the NT [region] a hundred years later, in the middle of the thirteenth century. Obviously, we can speak here about parallel processes, but not united changes. After all, they occurred five generations apart!

Up to this point, we have been discussing dialectal groups and regions. To conclude, let us briefly note literary language and, more precisely, the chronologically first literary language in Ukraine. Territorially, without question, it was designated for all East Slavs and then did not go beyond these limits. Its cradle was linked with the church, and indirectly with the state, as the church functioned in, and for, the state.<sup>15</sup> In essence, this language was the heir of three traditions—Moravian, Macedonian, and Bulgarian. However, its flesh and spine in Rus' were [filled out by] the latter [Bulgarian]. Undoubtedly, local East Slavic elements were mixed in, but not so much systematically or intentionally as on account of an absence of training and education, although with time, some of them were actually codified. It is not readily apparent whether a second, parallel variant of the literary language was formed—[namely,] a secular, and first and foremost administrative, language (if we are refer here specifically to a formalized, that is, standardized, language). Local administrative standards that were more or less comprehensive existed, but their level of consistency and territories of use are obscured from our view, and perhaps such data will never be extracted owing to a lack of materials. The only thing that we know for sure is that there was a literary language based on the Church Slavonic one, and it was sanctioned, propagated, cultivated, and maintained by the church. In

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<sup>15</sup> Theoretically, Bulgarians and Macedonians could also belong here [in this space of literary language], but they were felled by the blows of Byzantium in 972 and 1018 [respectively].

principle, it was pan-Rus' [or Common Rusian]—from the word *Rus'*, not from the word *Russia*. After all, in the Middle Ages, it was typical to have supranational, church-nurtured (but not limited to church use) literary languages—such as the Latin in places where the state religion was Catholic. The existence of this type of literary Church Slavonic language is only very marginally pertinent to the question of the genesis of the Ukrainian language (under examination here).

And now—a summation. There was an ebb and flow of literary languages in Ukraine: they were created, they were employed, and they fell out of use. The continuity of an active, “natural,” and “uncontrived” [Ukrainian] language spans approximately 1,300 years. It is possible to provide a more or less exact date of origin for every *literary* language. The Old Church Slavonic language was fashioned by Cyril of Thessalonica around 863, similarly as later, the German language flowed from Martin Luther’s translation of the Bible of 1522–42, and the [literary] Italian sprang from the pen of Dante at the beginning of the fourteenth century. [But] it is impossible to produce such a date for every *living*<sup>16</sup> language; this is also true for the Ukrainian. The nominal date for the emergence of the Old Ukrainian literary (church) language is the date of the baptism of Rus’—988. This language can, and should, be called Old Rus’. But the genuine, “living” Ukrainian language was never “Old Rus’”; was never “Common Rusian”; was never the same as Russian; and was neither an ancestor nor a descendant nor an offshoot of the Russian language. It was burgeoning and sprouted from the Proto-Slavic, taking shape between the sixth to sixteenth centuries; and the brightest scholar would not be able pinpoint the date of its inception. It was coming into being for centuries, and advancing a hypothesis as to the year, or even century, of its appearance would be an entirely arbitrary pursuit. It can be either young or old, depending on the inevitably random dating (chronological computation) of its nascence. This dating can only be haphazard, and perhaps it might be better still for it to remain unspecified or varied and fluid.

Until recently, most Ukrainians championed [the idea of] the distinctiveness/separateness of their language from time immemorial. And most Russians endorsed [the notion of] the enduring unity of that language with the Russian—as their acolytes abroad did as well. There were, and are, multitudes of the latter. The assertion that “almost all foreign Slavists consider it [that is, Common Russian]<sup>17</sup> to be a fiction” (Pivtorak 28) is, of course, an illusion; but so much material has been assembled by this juncture

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<sup>16</sup> [Our emphasis.—Ed.]

<sup>17</sup> [Shevel'ov's clarification in the original, Ukrainian-language article.—Ed.]

that serious Russian scholars can no longer defend the myth of a unified “all-Russian” or Old Russian language. It is not by happenstance that I have referred several times here to Trubachev (even though he reports on isolated manifestations and refrains from generalizing, and his ideal still lies “in the search for unity”). A similar situation arises with Valentin Ianin and others. And their numbers will increase. One need not cast from these issues a political projection onto the present, as I have already said. It is unnecessary. Furthermore, it is incorrect and risky. These are unrelated matters.

Smal'-Stots'kyi's 1913 concept was unsubstantiated and unsuitable. Shakhmatov was a more serious scholar, but his supposition also has not withstood the test of time. Nearly yearly, he put out a revised version of his history of the formation of the East Slavic languages. This topic haunted him. He subjected his interpretation to ever-deepening modification, but each time, he [nevertheless] underscored the “all-Russianness” (*obshcherusskost'*) of the lingual situation prior to the emergence of the three modern languages. However, his actions do not merely represent a manifestation of confidence and persistence; they also demonstrate the degree to which such questions tormented him. At one point, his approach was oppressive—in his indigestible *Ocherk" drēvneishago perioda istorii russkago iazyka* (*Outline of the Most Ancient Period in the History of the Russian Language*, 1915). Then, he made a pendulum swing to straightforward expression in [*Istoricheskii protsess" obrazovaniia russkikh" plemen" i narēchii* (*The Historical Process of the Formation of Russian Tribes and Dialects*)—vol. 1 of] *Vvedenie v" kurs" istorii russkago iazyka* (*Introduction to the Course of the History of the Russian Language*, 1916). Time and again, he would craft alternate configurations, fortifying the previous ones; however, he kept perceiving ominous fissures there. We cannot say whether after 1920,<sup>18</sup> he would have come to deny the “all-Russian” nature of his entire set of constructions. The obstacles were considerable—inertia in his scholarly trajectory, on the one hand, and likely subconscious political motivations, on the other hand. His liberal-Kadet sympathies demanded from him an acknowledgement of the three modern East Slavic languages; his Russian-imperial patriotism did not afford him the ability to see the whole truth. In 1905, he defended freedom of the press for Ukrainian literature. However, he did so not [out of sympathy] for the needs of Ukrainians but because he saw no danger [in such freedom] for the Russian Empire (Shevel'ov, *Ukraīns'ka mova* 34). The separation of Ukraine in 1917–18 evoked sharp opposition from Shakhmatov (Lotots'kyi 359). [Alas,] scholars do not easily unshackle themselves from their political affinities.

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<sup>18</sup> [Shakhmatov died on 16 August 1920.—Ed.]

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