The land into which Volodimer the Saint introduced Christianity as an official cult about 988 was stateless. It is true that Volodimir forced most of the few important towns in the vast area between Kiev and Novgorod to accept his brothers and sons as overlords by his death in 1015. But how different were the realities and conceptions of community and of outsiders in that period from those of today—and how misleading can be modern conceptions of sovereignty and frontiers when applied to these phenomena. Volodimer's political achievement, remarkable though it was, amounted to this: the establishment of a ruling clan and its retinues with tributary rights over a welter of different peoples at central points in agricultural communities and along commercial routes. When the Mongols came two hundred fifty years later, Rus' was more populous, more urban, more literate, ethnically more homogeneous, and richer in the extent of land under tillage and in the vitality of urban manufacturing and commerce. It had a fragmented political culture centered in a multitude of what I. Ia. Froianov and others have called city-states.

The degree to which towns generated independent political cultures with institutional coherence and sense of community varied considerably. Nor were literati consistent when they wrote of a larger entity called Rus' or the Rus'skaia zemlia. City-state and Rus', both terms were concepts of community. Whether they ever were defined in territorial terms with frontiers beyond which Others had a different body politic and a different loyalty is open to question.

The dynamic by which these communities came into being and the forms they took were the result of related but different processes, each of which might be said to have had its own frontier. Illustrating these processes is analogous to placing one transparency atop another on a map of Rus'. A first set of imaginary transparencies marks areas of agricultural tillage and towns. A second set illustrates manufactures and commerce; a third shows the areal of a common written culture as defined by evidence of Christian worship and literacy; a fourth set marks ethno-linguistic frontiers. My last set of imaginary transparencies reflects political units and the frontiers of self-identity, that is, how people defined their community and what divided them
from Others. For each category of community and its frontier I offer three transparencies; the first of Rus’ about 1000, the second reflecting the situation around 1100, and the third the state of things from 1200 to the Mongol invasions of 1238-40.

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My transparencies of agricultural tillage and towns take the form of points registering fortified places identified by archaeologists. Probably not all of them were permanent settlements, but then how many micro-settlements there were, mere hamlets without walls, one can only guess. The dots are indicative of human effort and to suggest that in the aggregate they represent densities of settlement should not lead us far astray. In the transparencies the points come in various sizes according to the size of their fortified areas. I take them as a rough measure of the size of settlements from the humblest pogost to the greatest of towns. The pattern of their development to the Mongol invasion will be of great importance in defining modifications in the development of all other phenomena under investigation.

The model owes much to the dynamic statistical profile of settlements and town formation in Rus’ developed by the late A. V. Kuza.1 In the first transparancy settlements existing about 1000 already show up as a pattern of clusters. The largest and densest cluster was that on the central Dnepr and its tributaries; a lesser cluster was evident on the upper part of the southern Bug and Dnestr Rivers to the west; another shows up on the upper Don. Elsewhere patterns were thinner, the dots even widely dispersed as in the loose cluster on the Northern Bug River and on the Pripiat' and its southern tributaries, or that on the upper Neman. Elsewhere individual points existed in empty spaces.

By 1100 the same clusters were larger and denser with the exception of that on the upper Don which disappeared. There were also new clusters: on the upper Dnepr around Smolensk, along the Oka and to its north; and a sparser cluster between the upper Volga and Lake Il’men forming the nucleus of the Novgorod land. By 1200 there were many more sites, but the tightest cluster and the most settlements were still in the central Dnepr basin from the Ros River on the right bank south of Kiev to the Desna to the northeast. This was the southernmost area of mixed forest and pasture. In the same zone

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