To Kathrin

Contents

Introduction

"The Unfinished City" and Its Histories

How could we, historians, combine the general (total) history approach with the microhistory of one location—one city without a single national majority, well-established self-identification, or a broadly recognizable mythology? And how, in attempting to produce such a story, could we evade the typical traps of methodological nationalism, static and teleological, imperial or Marxist-Leninist ideology, or any other reductionist generic approach? What would an entangled history of a particular place could look like? And how do prevailing views on "central" historical events (World Wars, Revolutions of 1917–1921, the establishment and the collapse of the Soviet Union) and "big" topics such as modernity, nationalism, migration be subjected to revision and re-thinking through in-depth analysis and proper contextualization in the light of local evidence and data? The ambition of this book is to face these questions by proposing a synthesis of the history of one city in present-day Ukraine.

The protagonist of this book—the city of Dnipro—is quite young (its entire history is just several hundred years old) and has undergone quite a few names changes. In the late eighteenth century, it was called *Katerynoslav* (that is, a city named in honor of Catherine the Great). In 1926, it was renamed *Dnipropetrovsk* after a local Bolshevik, and in 2016, it was renamed again, this time into *Dnipro*. Some recognizable names of the city never became official—the first and oldest "Sicheslav" reflected the mythology of the Zaporozhian Cossacks (which will be discussed more than once throughout this book). Along with the official names, there were also metaphorical ones: "the new Athens," "southern Manchester," "the heart of Ukraine." Additionally, when describing this city, which has never had metropolitan status, the image of *Potemkin's capital* or *Brezhnev's capital* (also called "the capital of stagnation"), as well as "the Jewish capital of Ukraine" was used quite often. The difficulty in capturing the essence of this city

in light of its changing history is reflected in the difficulty of giving it a proper name.

Another important dimension of my analysis is the complexity of human experiences. In locating Katerynoslav-Dnipropetrovsk-Dnipro in a wider regional, national, and transnational context and exploring the interaction between global processes and everyday routines of urban life, special attention will be paid to the narratives of certain individuals such as the local enthusiast of industrialization Oleksandr Pol', the Princess Vera Urusova (who reflected on the complexity of revolutionary events 1917–1921 in her French-language diary), the Ukrainian historian and writer Viktor Petrov (Domontovych) who strived to capture the city's mythology in his intellectual prose, and Menachem Mendel Ussishkin—the devoted leader of the Zionist movement.

In paying attention to a spectrum of individual voices, this book aims at approaching the city as a whole.[1] To achieve this goal, I have structured this book in such a way that every chapter focuses on a number of key threads in the modern history of Europe: the imperial colonization and industrialization, the war and the revolution in the borderlands, the everyday life and mythology of a Soviet "closed" city, and the transformations of post-Soviet Ukraine. The city's biography in this book is an interdisciplinary undertaking with local and transnational dimensions, and with a special focus on the effects that prominent (sometimes global) historical events had at a local, municipal level.

In the first chapter, I discuss the emergence of the city's project in the lower reaches of the Dnipro River as the transition zone between the steppe and the wooded area, and between a settled culture and nomadism that had been lacking urban development for centuries. Features of nature (primarily the openness of the steppe and the presence of rapids on the lower Dnipro, which made navigation impossible), as well as the specificity of the Russian imperial imagination of the late eighteenth century, are among the main themes of this chapter. Only about 250 years ago, the territory of present-day south-eastern Ukraine stopped being "the Wild Field," when the Ottoman Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth ceded their control over the region to Russia. At the same time, the construction of the city named after the Empress Catherine II began in the area that used to be home to several Cossack settlements. So, the interplay

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1   Compare Shahe Ewen, *What is Urban History?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), and Richard Sennett, *Building and Dwelling. Ethics for the City* (London: Penguin Books, 2019).

between the imperial and the Cossack, as well as the decline of the "new Athens" project will be analyzed in detail.

In the late nineteenth century, Katerynoslav was transformed into a city that became known as the "Manchester of the South," thanks to rapid industrialization. With this change, came foreign investments over the deposits of iron ore and coal found in the region; a new railroad was built, as well as a bridge over the Dnipro River. The city now looked—to both local and foreign writers— "more like some mining town in south Germany or Belgium."[2] The entire complexity of rapid industrialization, the problems of migrants and suburbs, of imperial "multi-culturalism," and emerging modern notions of Ukrainianness, Russianness, Jewishness, of urban riot and inter-ethnic-violence are addressed in the second chapter of this book.

In 1917–1921, the years of the revolutions and civil wars in southern Ukraine, the city of Katerynoslav experienced kaleidoscopic changes of power: Ukrainian socialist government was replaced by the Austrian-German-backed Hetmanate, and Nestor Makhno—with his rural anarchists—was replaced by Bolsheviks. These perturbations are analyzed in the third chapter, where I pay special attention to survival strategies and behavior patterns exhibited by different groups of city-dwellers. Some of these contradictory efforts corresponded to competing political forces that hoped to establish a legitimate rule and to adapt their political programs to expectations of the local population. I trace these trajectories back to the city's experience during the First World War and approach this problem from a perspective of imperial situation.

In the 1920s, Dnipropetrovsk became a Soviet industrial center and experienced all modifications brought by the Soviet policies: from the "Ukrainization" of paperwork and education to the enforced collectivization of agriculture, as well as the purges and persecutions of the 1930s (all analyzed in the fourth chapter). Special attention here is given to the micro-historical analysis of such events as the Great Famine 1932–33 and the Soviet nation-building, each of which is the subject of intense politicization and simplification.

In the fifth chapter, I discuss the experiences of Dnipropetrovsk during the Second World War, particularly during the time of the Nazi occupation (from late August 1941 until late October 1943). The diverse experience of the German colonial rule, the policies of the "final solution of the Jewish question," the strategies of survival, and religious and cultural life "under the Germans" are explored. Additionally, I introduce uncovered archival sources of valuable

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2   *Ves' Ekaterinoslav. Spravochnaia kniga* (Ekaterinoslav: L. I. Satanovskii, 1913), 104.

German-language personal accounts and documentary materials. The re-establishment of the Soviet rule is also analyzed.

After the Second World War in 1959, Dnipropetrovsk was closed for foreigners (including visitors from other socialist countries) on account of a ballistic missile production facility operating there. The biggest among Soviet Ukraine's eleven "closed" cities, by the late 1970s Dnipropetrovsk became a "millionaire"—a city with a million-plus population. In the sixth chapter, I review the dimensions and paradoxes of the "closedness": the KGB's tight control over the city; the prestige of the Dnipropetrovsk University; the better centralized food supply in comparison with other industrial cities; the ninth ward of the regional mental asylum, with more than sixty patients diagnosed as "sluggish schizophrenics" and convicted for "anti-Soviet activities." Many residents of Dnipropetrovsk attributed the city's "closedness" to the myth that the city was especially favored by Leonid Brezhnev, who began his career as a Communist functionary in the city in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The Brezhnev mythology, as well as the Soviet nationality's policy and its implications for Ukrainian and Jewish cultural life in the city are also analyzed.

In 1987, the period of city's "closedness" came to an end and by late 1991, the Soviet Union itself ceased to exist. How were the city's appearance and images affected by the unexpected "openness" and decline in the missile production sector, the demographic and economic crises, the necessity to retarget from Moscow to Kyiv, and the search for its own place in the independent Ukraine? These questions are addressed in the Epilogue which is deliberately concise, partly because I have decided to refrain from describing the events I have myself participated in, and partly because such important and controversial contemporary issues deserve special anthropological, sociological, and political studies research.

Still, there is one major issue I could not avoid. Post-Soviet Dnipropetrovsk was initially perceived as a part of the stereotypical "eastern Ukraine," but after the Euromaidan protests in 2013–2014 and the start of the armed conflict in the neighboring Donbas region, Dnipropetrovsk began to be conceptualized as the center of Ukrainian political loyalty and resistance to pro-Russian separatism. The striking difference between the post-Maidan political trajectories of Dnipropetrovsk, on the one hand, and those of Donetsk and Luhansk, on the other, has been often explained in the terms of regional "identity" or "values."[3] In this

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3   On the risks of theleologization of "identity" and possibilities to avoid it see Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1–47. On the

book, I offer a different approach, based firstly on an analysis of the situational responses by local elites and civil society.

The existing histories of Dnipropetrovsk, and Eastern Europe in general, are dominated by narratives in which society is presented as neatly grouped into clearly defined and stable nations.[4] Less attention is devoted to writing about ethnic or ideological "indifference," indeterminacy, or hybridity.[5] Can these qualities be addressed not just as a relic, or an instance of underdevelopment, but as a form of response to different political and cultural challenges?

The researchers' reluctance to address the phenomenon of ideological indifference has a narrative twin in the late Soviet and post-Soviet historiography of Dnipro(petrovsk)—the practice of ignoring the city's complex Jewish history. In the early twentieth century, Jews accounted for up to 40% of Katerynoslav's population. Despite the prominence of present-day Jewish life and the construction of Europe's biggest Jewish community center (called Menorah) in the center of Dnipro, the most recent locally published books of the city's history avoid any detailed analysis of the variety of Jewish social life. Indeed, they barely mention Jews at all.[6] At the same time, the Jewish past is singled out in a number of special publications,[7] which sometimes lack a broader contextual approach and tend to narratively reproduce the stereotypical notion of an almost complete separation of Jewish and non-Jewish groups in Katerynoslav.

How do we avoid the arbitrary assignment of belonging to a "national group" and, simultaneously, how do we take care not to underestimate the religious

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applicability of "values-based" interpretations and their traps see Mykola Riabchuk, *Dolannia ambivalentnosti. Dykhotomiia ukraïnsʹkoï natsionalʹnoï identychnosti—istorychni prychyny ta politychni naslidky* (Kyïv: Instytut politychnykh i etnonatsiohalʹnykh doslidzhenʹ imeni I. F. Kurasa, 2019), 190–199.

4   See an insightful critic of such a methodological nationalism in: Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, "Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology," *The International Migration Review* 37, no. 3 (2003): 576–610. Compare Ilya Gerasimov, "When Neighbors Begin to Hate," *Ab Imperio* 2 (2019): 123–156.

5   Compare important observations on the perspectives of researching "national indifference" in Tara Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis," *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (2010): 93–119.

6   See, for example, A. H. Bolebruch, ed., *Istoriia mista Dnipropetrovsʹka* (Dnipropetrovsʹk: Grani, 2006).

7   See, for instance, O. Iu. Rostovtsev, *Ievreï Dnipropetrovshchyny: istoriia ta suchasnistʹ* (Dnipropetrovsʹk: Art-Pres, 2012); Aleksandra Loshak and Valentyn "Starostyn," *Sinagogi Ekaterinoslava* (Dnipro: Herda, 2019).

and/or ethnic self-definitions in writing the city's history? How do we depict the dynamic nature of group (self-) understanding and the changing character of the very notion of "nationality" as well as its competing and hybrid forms? Critical reflection on such research tasks could help us respond to Andreas Kappeler's request that he made in his discussion of Mark von Hagen's path-breaking essay "Does Ukraine Have a History?": "case studies of cities, universities and smaller regions should analyze the reality of polyethnicity and the complexities of cultural, social and political interactions in several historical periods."[8]

By underscoring my ambition to fulfill Kappeler's request, I would also like to mention my desire to include as much local scholarship (so-called *kraieznavstvo*) as possible, and have these sources interact with sources in English, German, and Polish that themselves were barely used in the analysis of Dnipro's history. At the same time, this book is not a *kraieznavstvo* piece. It is an attempt at a critical entangled history. My ambition in writing this book is to propose a complex and transparent narrative, open for critical (re-)interpretations. Hopefully, my methodological concerns and proposals are adequately reflected in the very choice of terminology used, topics raised, sources analyzed, perspectives taken (or avoided).

The complex issues of multiethnicity and dynamic political identifications have become particularly demanding when it comes to consistent transliteration of Cyrillic names. Every responsible research publication should find a middle way between the Scylla of inevitable reduction of historical complexity (or even unwilling nationalization of certain phenomena), and the Charybdis of getting lost in competing ideological denominations. In order to make the text readable, names of geographical locations on the territory of present-day Ukraine are transliterated from Ukrainian, so it will be Katerynoslav (not Ekaterinoslav or Yekaterinoslav) and Dnipro (not Dnieper or Dnepr), even though the Russian form is always given when first mentioned and preserved in citations. Names of historical figures are transliterated phonetically with the exception of already established forms in English publications: that is why we have Yavornytsky and not Iavornyts'kyi (even though the phonetical transliteration is preserved in the bibliographic endnotes). Archival sources are quoted with the preservation of originally used denominations (*opys—sprava—arkush* in Ukrainian, and *opis'—delo—list* in Russian) so one can easily find them if needed.

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8   Andreas Kappeler, "Ukrainian History from a German Perspective," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 3 (1995): 700.

I am well aware of what Raymond Aron observed in 1938, that "historical understanding cannot be separated from the position and limits of the person seeking that understanding and that a consciousness of one`s own place in the process one is seeking to describe and explains both deepens and restricts the scope of all such explanation."[9]

The writing of this book was preceded by a long period of preparation (including archival work and cataloguing some oral historical accounts). When, upon my graduation from Dnipropetrovsk University, I left my hometown and studied in Warsaw, Trier and Lviv, I every now and then discovered new facts of my home city's history.

I first presented my vision of a book about Dnipropetrovsk in the winter of 2012 in Kyiv (a public lecture by the Polit.ua web-portal) and at the University of Cambridge (where I delivered the Tenth Stasiuk Lecture in Ukrainian studies, *Lieu de non-memoir. A Ukrainian City and its Russian, Soviet and Jewish traces*). I owe the debt of gratitude to the Institute of Advanced Study (Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin), Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Marion Dönhoff Stiftung, Landis & Gyr Stiftung in Zug, Institute for Human Sciences (IWM) in Vienna—the organizations whose stipends and support enabled me to write this book and discuss its main points with the colleagues all around the world. I finished the main part of my manuscript while working at the University of Geneva in the project "Divided Memories, Shared Memories. Ukraine/Russia/Poland (20th–21st Centuries): An Entangled History" supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation.

The structure of my book and my choice of arguments were greatly influenced by the conversations and discussions with my colleagues in Eastern European history and Slavic studies, as well as my students at the European University Viadrina (Frankfurt/Oder), University of Potsdam, Humboldt University of Berlin, Free University Berlin, Free University of Brussels, University of Basel, SciencesPo Paris and SciencesPo Lyon.

I am deeply grateful to Dmytro Yavornytsky National History Museum of Dnipro and personally Kateryna Hryshchenko, Museum "Memory of Jewish People and the Holocaust in Ukraine" and personally Yehor Vradiy for providing valuable illustrations to my book. The same applies to Denys Shatalov who eagerly shared unique photos from his private archive.

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9   Raymond Aron, *Introduction à la philosophie de l`histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986). Quoted and commented in Tony Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility. Blum, Camus, Aron, and the French Twentieth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 140.

I could not properly express my gratitude to my first teachers in historical research from Dnipro: the late Svitlana Abrosymova, Liudmyla Harkusha, and Anatolii Holub. The same applies to the supervisor of my PhD dissertation, my dearest teacher from Lviv, Yaroslav Isaievych. I could also not stop thinking about Boris Dubin, Mark von Hagen, and Arsenii Roginskii who waited for this book to be finished and whose living memory helped me tremendously in fulfilling my promise.

Of paramount importance for me was the help and support of my sister and colleague, Tetiana Portnova, who works at the Dmytro Yavornytsky National History Museum of Dnipro. We prepared together several publications on various aspects of the history of our hometown—in particular, about its Jewish past and the semiotics of the city's two anniversaries, imperial and "Brezhnevian."[10]

I am also grateful to Oleh Kotsyuba and Ekaterina Yanduganova who brought this book, after so many years, to the publisher, and to the Center for Governance and Culture in Europe at the University of St. Gallen for financial support of the publication. Three peer-reviewers of my manuscript provided exceptionally helpful and insightful critics that substantially contributed to improving my argumentation and convinced me to re-write the introduction. Gratefully acknowledging their assistance, I confirm that all final decisions, conclusions, suggestions, inconsistences and mistakes in this book are mine.

My wife Olesia and daughter Nadiia-Oresta gave me their priceless help when I was working on the book. Their love, understanding, and patience made this research finally alive.

Kyiv—Berlin—Zug—Łódź—Vienna—Dnipro, 2012–2022

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10   Andrii Portnov and Tetiana Portnova, "Die 'jüdische Hauptstadt der Ukraine'. Erinnerung und Gegenwart in Dnipropetrovs'k," *Osteuropa* 10 (2012): 25–40; idem, "The 'Imperial' and the 'Cossack' in the Semiotics of Ekaterinoslav-Dnipropetrovsk: The Controversies of the Foundation Myth," in *Urban Semiotics: The City as a Cultural-Historical Phenomenon*, ed. Igor Pilshchikov (Tallinn: TLU Press, 2015), 223–250; idem, "Soviet Ukrainian Historiography in Brezhnev's Closed City: Mykola/Nikolai Kovalsky and His 'School' at the Dnipropetrovsk University," *Ab Imperio* 4 (2017): 265–291; idem, "'Bez pochvy' Viktora Petrova i 'Sobor' Olesia Honchara: dve istorii ukrainskoï literatury XX veka," *Neprikosnovennyĭ zapas* 2 (2019): 116–133.

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The Potemkin City

There are intentional and unintentional cities.

Fyodor Dostoevsky,
Notes from the Underground

Like Saint Petersburg, Katerynoslav (in Russian, Ekaterinoslav) is an example of an intentional city. It arose almost one hundred years later than its northern rival as part of the Russian Empire's ambitions to expand southward that included the conquest of territories known as the Byzantine birthplace of eastern Christianity. But unlike St. Petersburg, almost all endeavors envisaged by the founders of Katerynoslav—Catherine II and Prince Potemkin—remained on paper as an unrealized dream of the "new Athens." The city we will be talking about, however, did not appear out of the blue. In many respects, it was based on and, at the same time, symbolically opposed to the previous settlements (first of all the Cossack ones) in the region defined by such natural forces as Big River with the rapids and the Wild Steppe.

The River Dnipro can be called the main artery of Ukrainian history, which for centuries served also as a political border (hence such concepts as Right-Bank and Left-Bank Ukraine).[1] Because of a series of rapids—huge rocks and waterfalls—in its lower reaches, the Dnipro was almost impossible to navigate and, accordingly, its southern banks and the inflow of the river into the Black Sea remained sparsely populated for centuries. This was further facilitated by the natural geography of the region—the vast open areas of the steppe were an ideal space for a variety of nomadic peoples. The difficulty in settling the land explains

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1   I am using a Ukrainian-language word "Dnipro," which is also considered an official name of the river for international usage. Compare Roman Adrian Cybriwsky, *Along Ukraine's River. A Social and Environmental History of the Dnipro* (Budapest: Central University Press, 2018).

the belated urbanization of this region and provides a natural setting for the play of history there.

The Dnipro and Its Rapids

The Dnipro (in Russian, Dnepr, which gave birth to the wide-spread English form Dnieper), is one of Europe's largest rivers. It was mentioned by Herodotus in his description of the events of 512 B.C. as Borysthenes (Βορυσθένης—"northern river"). Dnipro is described in the old Rus′ chronicles, written in the early twelfth century in Kyiv (in Russian, Kiev), as the main artery in the history of Rus′. It was also a part of the trade route metaphorically called "from the Varagians to the Greeks" (for example, the route taken from Scandinavia across the Dnipro and the Black Sea to the Byzantine Empire), first mentioned in the "Primary Chronicle" in the context of Andrew the Apostle's legendary voyage, which presumably led up the Dnipro to Kyiv and Novgorod, even though historians still argue about the precise charting of the route, as well as about the time period when it was pioneered.[2]

Such a journey involved fighting one's way through the rapids, whose names were first mentioned in a work by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *On the Governance of the Empire* (*De Administrando Imperio*).[3] In the seventeenth-century French engineer, Guillaume Le Vasseur de Beauplan compiled *Description d'Ukranie* (first published in 1651, reissued in 1660), where he gave the following description of the rapids defining them with the Ukrainian term *Porohy*:

> This *Porohy* is a ridge of such stones reaching quite cross the river, whereof some are under water, others level with the surface, and others eight or ten foot above it. They are as big as a house, and very close to one another, so that it resembles a dam or bank to stop the course of the river, which then falls down five or six foot in some places, and six or seven in others.[4]

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2   For details see Gerhard Podskalsky, *Christentum und theologische Literatur in der Kiever Rus′ (988–1237)* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1982).

3   On linguistic debates about the names of the rapids given in the emperor's book see Andriy Danylenko, "The Names of the Dnieper Rapids in Constantine Porphyrogenitus Revisited. An Attempt at Linguistic Attribution," *Die Welt der Slaven* 46 (2001): 43–62; V. G. Skliarenko, *Rus′ i variahy: Istoryko-etymolohichne doslidzhennia* (Kyïv: Dovira, 2006), 75–92.

4   Gillauime le Vasseur de Beauplan, "A Description of Ukraine, Containing Several Provinces of the Kingdom of Poland," in *A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Some Now First Printed from*

FIGURE 1.
The rapids on
the Dnipro. Early
twentieth-century
postcard.
Dmytro Yavornytsky
National History
Museum of Dnipro.

Attempts to dig canals for flooding the outcrops protruding from the water almost failed and the rapids remained an impressive sight. As the mid mid-nineteenth century ethographer Oleksandr/Alexander Afanasev wrote,

> Imagine ranges of rocks strewn across the river, from one bank to another, in several rows, each one lower than the previous, and this will give you a picture of the rapids. In a downward rush, the stream races through the openings between the rocks and froths with a deafening sound.[5]

The rapids stretched for ninety kilometers, covering the territory between the present-day cities of Dnipro and Zaporizhzhia. The biggest among the nine main rapids, Nenasytets, reached a length of more than two kilometers, while the height of the waterfall was about five meters.[6] In addition to the rapids, the lower Dnipro had more than sixty rocks and islets including Monastyrsky (Monastery) Island, which had never experienced a flood. This circumstance, apparently, gave rise to legends stating that this piece of land had been used in olden times as a camping site by Rus′ armies on their way to Constantinople.

Original Manuscripts in 4 volumes, vol. 1 (London: Awnsham and John Churchill, 1704), 579.

5   A. S. Afanas′ev (Chuzhbinskiĭ), *Poezdka v Iuzhnuiu Rossiiu. Ocherki Dnepra* (St. Petersburg: German Goppe, 1893), 84.

6   More on the rapids see in D. I. Iavornytskyĭ, *Dniprovi porohy. Heohrafichno-istorychnyĭ narys* (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytsvo Ukraïny, 1928) and A. Loboda, V. Petrov, eds, *Materialy do vyvchennia vyrobnychykh ob′iednan′. Issue 1. Dniprovs′ki lotsmany* (Kyïv: Etnohrafichna komisiia VUAN, 1929).

The raging rapids presented the most difficult obstacle for boats on the Dnipro. The majority of the boats were able to make their way only during the spring when the snow melted and all rapids except the biggest one, Nenasytets (this name derives from *nenasytny*—insatiable) were covered with water.

Past the rapids lay the Dnipro flood plains—a veritable labyrinth of inlets and islets covered with thick but low-grown forests. The above mentioned French cartographer Beauplan was fascinated by the abundance of flood plains, pelicans and cranes, the "unheard-of wealth" of fish (including sturgeons), numerous herds of wild goats and horses, "legions" of flies and mosquitoes as well as "throngs of locust" eclipsing the sun.[7] Later accounts confirmed the truthfulness of his portrayal of the scenery in the lower reaches of the Dnipro. References to the abundance of sturgeons, wild she-goats, and big-sized fowl can be found in the descriptions of Ukrainian steppes written in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries at the request of the Russian imperial administration.[8] In the early twentieth century, a visiting hunter, in reflecting with sadness on the disappearance of big animals and birds from the banks of the Dnipro, introduced pelicans as an illustrative case in his narrative: "pelicans are no longer nesting down the Dnipro either, although some of them even nowadays reach Kiev and Poltava at times, as rare vagrant guests."[9]

The Wild Field

Historians often refer to the region near the lower reaches of the Dnipro as the Great Frontier—an area situated between a wooded steppe and a bare steppe, where settled people and nomads, as well as people of different religions (Christianity and Islam) co-existed together. For centuries, this region was a contact zone rather than an impervious barrier. The so-called Wild Field or Wild Steppe was a space where settled and nomadic lifestyles not only confronted but complemented each other.[10]

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7   Beauplan, A Description of Ukraine, 580-583.

8   Anatoliĭ Boĭko, ed., *Opysy Stepovoï Ukraïny ostann′oï chverti XVIII–pochatku XIX stolittia*, (Zaporizhzhia: Zaporiz′kyĭ natsional′nyĭ universytet, 2009), 138, 142, 289.

9   L. A. Portenko, *Dnepr i Podneprov′e. Iz zapisok okhotnika-ékskursanta v raĭone srednego techeniia Dnepra* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1928), 179. Compare D. Humenna, "Lysty iz Stepovoï Ukraïny," *Pluh* no. 10 (1928): 39–61; Ibid., no. 11 (1928): 33–49.

10   For details see Ia. R. Dashkevich, "Bol′shaia granitsa Ukrainy. Ėtnicheskiĭ bar′er ili ėtnokontaktnaia zona," in *Ėtnokontaktnye zony v Evropeĭskoĭ chasti SSSR. Geografiia,*

The economic life of Eastern Europe in the ninth and the tenth centuries was dominated by slave trade, which gave birth to several communities that can be tentatively called "trading companies."[11] The superior position of one of these trading communities in the Dnipro region, which was sparsely populated by Slavic tribes, gave birth to the Christian state metaphorically called "Kyivan (Kievan) Rus'"—an invented book term, which appeared many centuries after Rus' went into decline on the banks of the Dnipro.[12]

Down the Dnipro, Rus' had a permanent neighbor—the steppe. Practically free of forests, this area stretched from the Dnipro's left bank to the Caucasus Mountains, with its sweltering heat in the summer and piercing cold in the winter. It was home to different nomadic communities. The longtime neighbors of Rus' were nomads referred to as Torkils, Pechenegs, and Cumans (or Polovtsians) in historical chronicles. Each of these appellations refers to ethnically and religiously heterogeneous communities who lived without a structured statehood in the steppe.

None of these groups was interested in taking over one or another piece of land but all of them conducted regular raids into settled areas in order to collect things they needed (first of all, slaves). The raids notwithstanding, the contacts between Rus' and the nomads were not purely confrontational. Their relationship was also shaped by ongoing trade, gift exchanges, military service, marriages, and numerous cultural influences.[13] The destructive component of the

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dinamika, metody izucheniia, ed. I. I. Krupnik (Moscow: Moskovskiĭ filial Geograficheskogo obshchestva SSSR, 1989), 7–21. Compare Ihor Chornovol, *Komparatyvni frontyry: svitovyĭ i vitchyznianyĭ vymir* (Kyïv: Krytyka, 2015). A comprehensive analysis of the Ukrainian steppe frontier could be found in Denys Shatalov, "Ukraïns′kyĭ stepovyĭ kordon (druha polovyna XV–persha polovyna XVII st.): viĭna i zdobych" (Master's diss., Dnipropetrovs′k National University, 2015).

11   Alekseĭ Tolochko, *Ocherki nachal′noĭ Rusi* (Kyïv: Laurus, 2015), 11.

12   More on Old Rus′ see in: I. N. Danilevskiĭ, *Drevniaia Rus′ glazami sovremennikov i potomkov (IX–XII vv.)* (Moscow: Aspekt Press, 1998); A. V. Nazarenko, *Drevniaia Rus′ na mezhdunarodnykh putiakh: Mezhdistsiplinarnye ocherki kul′turnykh, torgovykh i politicheskikh sviazeĭ IX–XII vv.* (Moscow: Iazyki russkoĭ kultury, 2001); O. P. Tolochko and P. P. Tolochko, *Kyïvs′ka Rus′* (Kyïv: Al′ternatyvy, 1998).

13   For details on Rus′-Steppe relations see Thomas S. Noonan, "Rus′, Pechenegs, and Polovtsy, Economic Interaction along the Steppe Frontier in the pre-Mongol Era," *Russian History* 19, no. 1–4 (1992): 301–327; Peter B. Golden, "Aspects of the Nomadic Factor in the Economic Development of Kievan Rus′," in *Ukrainian Economic History: Interpretive Essays*, ed. Ivan S. Koropeckyj (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 58–101; Omeljan Pritsak, "The Polovcians and Rus′," *Archivum Eurasieae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982): 321–380; O. B. Bubenok, *Iasy i brodniki v stepiakh Vostochnoĭ Evropy VI–nachalo XIII vv.* (Kyïv: Logos, 1997).

steppe's proximity was strongly exaggerated in the old Rus' chronicles and in the historical scholarship that later drew on them. Modern researchers assume as an axiom that the feuds between the princes were much more disastrous for Rus' than the nomads' raids; indeed, the princes "were second to none in devastating the Rus' lands."[14]

The symbiosis between Rus' and the Wild Field ended when the armies of the Mongol empire invaded the lands, and this series of invasions led to several forces of Rus' principalities and the Cumans joining forces in 1223. This debacle signaled the beginning of the end of the old Rus' and secured the Mongols' hold on its territory which included the bustling city of Kyiv).

The communities living in the steppe in the tenth to twelfth centuries left for greener pastures the stone idols in the Wild Field, which could be easily found even in the late eighteenth century[15] alongside with nomads' burial mounds. Throughout the nineteenth century, these statues were used en-masse as a source of stone for all sorts of construction projects, which led to the disappearance of thousands, maybe even tens thousands of the idols.[16] Dedicated collections of the remaining stone statues were formed only at the end of the nineteenth century, and presently are exhibited in Dnipro, Berdiansk, and Luhansk.

The Zaporozhian Cossacks and the Tatars

From the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, most the lands of old Rus' that are now a part of Ukraine and Belarus were incorporated into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland, which after the 1569 Union of Lublin formed the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Great Frontier, mentioned above, remained in the lower Dnipro region. Slave trade, too, continued to be the staple of the region's economy. According to the researchers of the

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14   Noonan, "Rus', Pechenegs, and Polovtsy," 302. Compare to the point that "it would be hard to show that any Rus' prince spent much more time campaigning against the Nomads than against his own kin within the dynastic lands." Maureen Perrie, ed., *The Cambridge History of Russia*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 89.

15   *Puteshestvennye zapiski Vasil'ia Zueva ot Sankt-Peterburga do Khersona v 1781 i 1782 godu* (Saint-Petersburg: Imperatorskaia Akademiia Nauk, 1787), 261.

16   S. A. Pletneva, *Polovetskie kamennye izvaianiia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1974); Ia. Dashkevich and E. Tryiarski, *Kamennye baby prichernomorskikh stepeĭ* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo PAN, 1982).

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