

Iurii Zazuliak
**Entangled Temporalities of the National Commemorations
and Academic History Writing in Contemporary Ukraine**
(Panel U2: "Reconfiguring the Past. Memory Politics and Practices
in the Wake of the Euromaidan in Ukraine)

In my paper I would like to discuss the relationship between the academic history-writing and the specific institutional temporality of the post-Soviet Ukrainian historiography on the hand, and the national commemorative practices on the other. I start with the premise of the key role of the institutions of the academic history-writing and the professional community of academic historians in the permanent production and circulation of the time of the national commemorations. I intend to demonstrate how the cyclical and mythological time of the nation, embedded in various sorts of historical celebrations, anniversaries and commemorations, is intertwined with the rhythms of the academic history-writing, and how it facilitates the involvement of the professional historians in the process of national historical myth-making.

Those interconnected temporalities and rhythms of the historians' professional activity and the national commemorations represent one of the major crossroads between professional and popular forms of history-writing. Regardless of their scholarly merits, the substantial part of the present-day Ukrainian academic historical writings is closely interrelated with the contexts of public rituals of national commemoration. Academic history writing often takes on the form of symbolic communication in the commemorative rituals. The consequence of this entanglement of the national and professional temporalities is often the scholarly parochialism of the substantial part of the academic history-writing. One can see the specific cultural style of the local humanities, embodied in various kinds of commemorative rituals and characterized by the tendency to the archaization and myth-making, as another manifestation of the influential place of what the Russian scholars Mikhail Sokolov and Kiril Titaiev called the "native science" (*туземная наука*) in the post-Soviet academia.¹

¹ According to Sokolov and Titaiev, "the native science," in contrast with other types of the post-Soviet humanities (e. g. "provincial science"), represents a self-contained system of the academic communication and institutional organization

To exemplify those interrelations, I focus on the academic contributions to the public commemorations of King Danylo Halytskyj during the last two decades in Ukraine. Duke/King Danylo (Danylo Romanovych, 1201-1264), named “Halytskyj” in the later historical tradition, was the most prominent of the Rurikids rulers in Galicia-Volyn during the 13th century. After the long period of wars against other rivals from the Rurikid clan as well as against the Hungarian and Polish rulers, Danylo Halytskyj was able to consolidate his personal and family’s power over the most parts of the region. The title of the king and the crown with which the Pope endowed him in 1253 was an act of symbolic recognition of his leading role among the Rus’ princes during the 1250-1260s. It is also commonly believed that he founded a city of Lviv (first mentioned in the sources under 1256). The polity founded by King Danylo in the region of the present-day Western Ukraine and eastern parts of Poland outlived him and existed until the mid-14th century. In 1340, after the death of the last ruler of Galicia-Volyn, Boleslaw-Iurii II, its territories became the object of the fierce half-century long struggle between the rulers of neighboring kingdoms of Poland, Hungary, Lithuania and Tatars.

During the last two decades several public celebrations connected with the person of Danylo Halytskyj (to mention just the most important of them – the commemoration of his birth followed by the erection of the monument in Lviv in 2001, his coronation in 2003, and the foundation of Lviv in 2006), created numerous occasions for the scholarly and quasi-scholarly publications devoted to his person. Those commemorative books include texts of various sorts – greetings and speeches of the local politicians, pieces of literary fiction, articles and essays written by professional academic researchers. As a rule, they are also complemented by the rich visual materials illustrating the commemorative events as well as the events which were commemorated. The richness of the visual

of knowledge with the predominant focus on the discussions and activities within the closed community of scholars. The native science requires the minimal contacts and intellectual exchange with the academic world outside of it, or such contacts are reduced to the mere ritual gestures. As a community of experts professionally involved in the production of academic knowledge, the “native science” presupposes the existence of the hierarchy of its own academic authorities, its own regimes of truth, its own scholarly schools and its own invented traditions. The “native science” shows a tendency to the mythologizing and megalomania, when it goes about the self-image as an expert community, the self-representation and self-understanding of its own role in the academia and society, etc. Last but not least, the native science is characterized by the special cultural style of academic writing which rather precludes any possibilities of its broader international scholarly communication. See the introductory remarks by Sokolov and Titaev and the following discussion on the “native” and “provincial science” with the participation of Marina Mogilner, Sergei Oushakine, Vladimir Ryzhkovskii, and others at *Антропологический форум* № 19 (2013).

material in those books attests to the medialization effects that the regular commemorations and memorial sites connected with them have produced.

From the point of view of the current academic historiography, the commemorative publications hardly bring anything new to the understanding or to the innovative interpretations of the ruler's life and epoch. However, they offer valuable insights into the functioning of the cultural memory about Danylo Halytskyj in its relation to the academic history writing. The commemorations and the books published on the occasions are telling examples of the key role of the historical images of the Kyivan Rus' past in the communicative and cultural processes of constructing and representing the early medieval Eastern Slavic history as a crucial element of the national historical narratives, public memory and popular historical culture. I suggest that the close analysis of the commemorative editions will contribute to the understanding of the figure of Danylo Halytskyj as a site of memory and to the investigation of the variety of memorial effects created by the different historical and commemorative representations of the Halych ruler.² In other words, I am not interested in the "real biography" of Danylo Halytsky, numerous versions of which are regularly published by the traditional academic history-writing in Ukraine. I would rather approach Danylo Halytskyj as a "figure of remembrance", situated at the crossroads of the academic and popular historical discourses and imaginations, whose contours has been constructed and changed through the permanent work of various academic institutions, the commemorative practices, industries of mass culture and mass media.

In my presentation I would like to take a closer look at two such commemorative volumes published in 2007 and 2009.³ As I've already mentioned above, those publications are mixture of various historical genres – scholarly articles, pieces of poetry, essays and reports from the media, visual materials, public addresses by politicians and public figures. Those commemorative historical

² For the comparative historiographic context and approaches to such topics, one can mention the study by Benjamin Schenk on Alexander Nevskii. See, Frithjof Benjamin Schenk, *Aleksandr Nevskij. Heiliger-Fürst-Nationalheld: Eine Erinnerungsfigur im russischen kulturellen Gedächtnis* (Köln-Weimar-Wien, 2004).

³ *Doba Korolia Danyla v nauuci, mystectvi, literaturi* [The Times of King Danylo in scholarship, arts, and fiction], (Materialy mizhnarodnoi naukovoï konferencii. 29/30 lystopada 2007 r. Lviv) (Lviv, 2008); *Korol Danylo Halytskyj u pamiatkakh istorii ta kultury* [King Danylo Halytskyj in monuments of history and culture], avtory proektu I uporiadnyky Bohdan Havryliv, Ivan Myroniuk (Ivano-Frankivsk, 2009).

works can be described as a bricolage of various sorts of texts and images. Both books reveal the close interrelations between the texts of academic historical research and other forms and genres of history-writing operating in the contexts of the national commemoration. What we can qualify as the true academic historical research with its claims to the rigor of textual analysis of the evidence, the comparative approach and innovative interdisciplinary insights that is the most essential elements of the scholarly history plays a very ambiguous role in those commemorative volumes. Their scholarly value and innovative character are significantly diminished by the general discursive and ideological framework of the commemorative narrative in which they are placed. From this perspective, the academic texts published in those volumes are not only the works of scholarship, but also performances in the commemorative rituals. Their role is to reaffirm the consensus within the community of scholars involved in the celebrations and to support or add to the textual scripts of national commemorations. The scholarly contributions to the volumes, even if misleading and flawed in their arguments and conclusions, gain additional legitimacy by operating with support of and in close interconnection with other textual and visual media of such commemorative practices and rituals. The cumulative effect of various kinds of interconnections between the scholarly and commemorative dimensions is the emergence of the historical discourse in which the boundaries between historical fiction and scholarly claims to the historical truth, between myth-making and academic analysis are barely visible.

I will outline two basic elements in the commemorative histories of Danylo Halytskyj to illustrate how the academic medieval studies are involved in the construction and reproduction of the essentialized and mythologized forms of the national Ukrainian medieval narrative. The first one, is the representation of the Halych-Volyn principality under the rule of Danylo Halytskyj as the medieval Ukrainian state and of King Danylo as a prominent statesman. The history of medieval Galicia-Volyn is inscribed into the mythologized historical narrative of the Ukrainian state- and nation-building by projecting back into the medieval past the modern concepts of the state and nation. This statist historical vision of is an obvious anachronism. Such historical representations clearly ignore the primary dynastic, patrimonial and composite character of the political organization of

Galicia-Volyn during the 13th century, which permitted all members of the Rurikid clans to claim their rights to their shares in the possession of the land.

The second element stresses the inherently European character of the polity under the rule of Danylo Halytskyj. Both volumes put, for example, the special emphasis on the coronation of Danylo held in 1253 in the town of Dorohychyn. The act of coronation with the crown sent to Danylo by the Pope and the acceptance of the title of king closed the period of negotiations and contacts between the Galician ruler and the Papacy. Those events are at the core of the historical mythology which could probably be best expressed by the motto “we always belonged to Europe”. This kind of historical mythologizing was without doubt a key cultural and ideological idiom underlying the search of the 19th- and 20th- century Ukrainian nation-builders for the cultural and civilizational legitimacy of the modern Ukrainian identity, and usually found within the cultural space of the European modernity. However, it had little to do with the 13th-century history of Galicia-Volyn. Even if we put aside the question of the meanings and perception of the idea of Europe during the High Middle Ages, still this mythology neither take into consideration the political and cultural hegemony of Mongols over the Rus’ principalities since the mid-13th century, nor it explains the predominant influence of the Byzantine traditions on the cultural and ecclesiastical life of the Rus’.

All in all, if seen in the comparative European perspective of the medieval historical research of the 19th-20th centuries, historical commemorative discourse centered on Danylo Halytskyj has much in common with with what Patrick Geary once called “the philologically based scientific history drafted into the service of nationalism”. In his insightful observations Patrick Geary further pointed out that “this kind of scientific history, by essentializing and simplifying the sources we have examined above from the Early Middle Ages turned subtle and complex ideologies into objectified identities suited to the demands of 19th century romantic nationalism... All of these nationalist claims share the common feature of looking at the medieval past and attempting to discover there not only

the origins of their peoples but their essences: their claim is that this distant past somehow establishes specific rights in the present and the future.”⁴

In one particular aspect, however, the operation of the academic Ukrainian history-writing within the commemorative framework complicates the picture drawn by Patrick Geary. In the recent debates of Ukrainian historians one can often find opinions stressing the profound change in the dominant history narrative which occurred in Ukraine following country’s independence in the period between 1989 and 1991.⁵ Some historians have argued that the Ukrainian national historical narratives and historical memory since its independence witnessed the radical break with the Soviet type of history-writing. I would rather disagree with this kind of interpretations as a one-sided and reductionist. My analysis of the commemorative books mentioned above suggests as many lines of ruptures as those of continuity in the construction of the national Ukrainian narrative between those two epochs.

To illustrate how the Soviet and the post-Soviet Ukrainian historical narratives are interdependent in the image of King Danylo, I propose to look at the short article by Volodymyr Hrabovetskyj about the battle near Dorohychyn which King Danylo won in 1238 against the German knights.⁶ In his praise of the military deeds and historical importance of the duke’s victory, Hrabovetskyj has called the battle “*poboische*” (debacle). The use of the term “*poboische*” is highly revealing with respect to its widespread in the Russian and Soviet heroic narrative of the history of the medieval Rus’ military conflicts with the Germans, more precisely against the Teutonic order. As a rule, the term “*poboische*” refers to the victory of Prince Alexander Nevskii in the battle on the Ice (*Liodovoie poboische*) against Teutonic knights in 1242. Behind the use of the term in the Hrabovetskyj article, one can detect the traces of other the conceptual markers, catchy words and cultural stereotypes inherent to the ideologically and nationally biased interpretations of the medieval

⁴ Patrick Geary, “European Ethnicities and European as an Ethnicity: Does Europe Have Too Much History?”, in *Making Medieval History*, eds. Graham A. Loud and Martial Staub (The University of York, 2017), 67.

⁵ E. g. Philipp Ther, “The Transnational Paradigm of Historiography and its Potential for Ukrainian History”, in *A Laboratory of Transnational History. Ukraine and Recent Ukrainian Historiography*, eds. Georgiy Kasianov and Philipp Ther (Budapest-New York, 2009), p. 81-114.

⁶ V. V. Hrabovetskyj, “Dorohochynske poboische” (The debacle at Dorohychyn), in *Korol Danylo Halytskyj u pamiatkakh*, 8-12.

German-Rus' relationships which dominated the Russian and Soviet historiography. It is noteworthy, for example, that Hrabovetskyj draw direct parallels between two events by interpreting the victory of Danylo at Dorohychyn as a harbinger of Alexander Nevskii's military triumph. In another volume we also find observations pondering upon the similarities and differences in the life and activity of Danylo Halytskyj and Alexander Nevskii. They belong, *nota bene*, to the Greek-Catholic Bishop, Father Iosyf Milian.⁷ It is interesting that the literary tradition of such parallel lives of Daylo Halytskyj and Alexander Nievskii goes back to the Soviet historical novels of the late Stalinist times.⁸

The continuity between the Soviet and post-Soviet becomes even more noticeable if one turns from the textual to the visual representations of medieval Galicia-Volyn and his ruler. The commemorative volumes are highly revealing with respect to the multiplications of the mediascapes about the medieval pasts which the regular and diverse commemorative practices brought about during the long period of the 1950s-2010s. It must be noted that essential part of the visual images (paintings, monuments) with which both volumes have been richly illustrated was produced during the Soviet times. For example, visual images chosen to illustrate the Hrabovetskyj's narrative of the battle at Dorohychyn are reproductions of the well-known Soviet paintings created to commemorate the event (S. Servetnyk, P. Sopilnyk). Based on this observation I suggest that a wide-reaching medialization of the Kyivan Rus' and Halych-Volyn past that had occurred during the Soviet, and especially the late Soviet times, still continues to influence the present-day cultural imagery and historical interpretations of the East Slavic and Ukrainian early medieval history.

Pushing my argument one step further, I contend that the homology between the Soviet and post-Soviet historiographical and commemorative cultures goes much deeper. It is not only the content, its visual representations and scholarly interpretations of the medieval past, but also the form of the scholarly commemorative volumes itself which has its roots predominantly in the Soviet Ukrainian academia and the culture of the Soviet Ukrainian history-writing. It was during the Soviet period when the time of national commemorations, even if it was a Soviet narrative of the Ukrainian

⁷ O. Iosyf Milian, "Doba Korolia Danyla v aspekti cerkovnomu", in *Doba Korolia Danyla*, 11.

⁸ Alexei Yugov, *Ratiborcy* [Warriors] (Moscow, 1944).

history, became the fundamental cultural and ideological force that structured the institutional field of the historical disciplines and influenced the agenda of the historical research. The practices of national commemoration enable professional historians to experience and assimilate the national commemorative time as a key cultural constituent for the construction and articulation of their own professional identity. The most important scholarly projects and the process of the selection of the scholarly themes and problems for the research were planned and adjusted to the cycles of the national commemoration. To publish the article in such a commemorative volume was and still is regarded as a sign of scholarly prestige which often reflects the distribution of the power and recognition in the academia as well as determine or reconfirm the hierarchy of interpretations.