

A “Portrait” and “Self-Portrait” of the Borderlands: The Cultural and Geographic Image of “Ukraine” in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries

Natalia Yakovenko

As is well known, the name *Ukraina* gives historians a good deal of trouble, for aside from its ostensibly transparent identification with the notion of “borderland” (*okraina*) there are hypotheses according to which it may derive from Common Slavic **ukrajb* and **ukraj*, that is, “separated tract of territory,” “country.”¹ The lack of appropriate monuments makes it impossible to confirm or deny such meanings in the vernacular, but from the moment the word *Ukraina* and its derivatives reappear in the late fifteenth century (after a few mentions in Old Rus') in the documentation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania,² its meaning does indeed coincide with the notion of “borderland.” These documents’s authors, Vilnius scribes, refer to the outlying pre-steppe lands of the state as *ukrainy* and to their inhabitants as *ukrainnyky* or *liudy ukrainni*. At times this notion is also extended to the southern part of the state as a whole: for example, in a letter of 1500 to Khan Mengli Giray of the Crimea, the Lithuanian grand duke refers to the regions of Kyiv, Volhynia, and Podillia³ as “our borderlands” (*nashi ukrainy*), and a privilege of 1539 for the building of a castle in Kyivan Polissia (that is, fairly distant from the steppe frontier) is justified by the utility of such castles “in Ukraine” (*na Ukraini*).⁴

¹ Cf. Serhii Shelukhyn, *Ukraina—nazva nashoi zemli z naidavnishykh chasiv* (Prague, 1936), 117–19; Yaroslav B. Rudnytsky, *Slovo i nazva “Ukraina”* (Winnipeg: Ukrainska knyharnia, 1951), 55–57; George Y. Shevelov, “The Name Ukrajina ‘Ukraine,’” in his *Teasers and Appeasers: Essays and Studies on Themes of Slavic Philology* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1971), 200 (the text was written in 1951).

² See the diplomatic correspondence of the 1490s in *Lietuvos Metrika (1427–1506): Knyga nr 5*, ed. Egidijus Banionis (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla, 1993), 66, 73, 117, 118, 131.

³ Ibid., 164.

⁴ *Lietuvos Metrika: Knyga nr 25 (1387–1546)*, ed. Darius Antanavičius and Algirdas Baliulis (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla, 1998), 114.

Parallel to the “technical term” (*ukraina/ukrainy*) in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was the semiofficial name “distant lands” (*zemli daleki*) for these same territories. This synonymous usage aptly brings out the element of cultural marking. What is involved here, after all, is not only the geographic signifier (distance from Vilnius) but also the cultural/geographic image (“mental space”) that took shape at the intersection of geographic knowledge and the “symbolic domestication” of a foreign world.⁵ The key problem in the deconstruction of such images is that of the relation between the hypothetical “archetypical image”—the “self-portrait” of a particular territory, so to speak—and the image imposed on it from outside as a kind of metajourney across the domesticated territories that establishes both the tropes of discourse and the repertoire of representative characteristics.⁶ The present article is an attempt to define this relation in general terms only, for a detailed analysis would of course require a considerably more extended investigation.

It is worth noting, to begin with, that the cultural/geographic image of Ukrainian territory as perceived by the inhabitants themselves up to the mid-sixteenth century is practically impossible to grasp because of the lack of appropriate sources. After all, the Ruthenian-language monuments of the period still observe the literary conventions of the Old Rus' era, that is to say, the geography of “Ruthenian space” is still usually subsumed under the general notion of the “Rus' Land.” For example, the compiler of the Second Cassianian redaction of the Kyivan Caves Patericon (1462) corrects what strikes him as “geographic imprecision”⁷ but “does not notice” the disintegration of the “Rus' Land” into a whole series of “lands,” which was perfectly apparent by the mid-fifteenth century. To be sure, political changes gradually led to the mention of new “lands,” such as those of Kyiv and Podillia, which became well established in the literature; these notions, however, were undoubtedly associated not with a geographic image but with the new potestative status of those territories.⁸ Unfortunately, research

⁵ For a broader discussion of the nature of so-called cultural/geographic images (with an extensive bibliography of literature on this problem dating from the 1970s and 1980s), see D. N. Zamiatin, *Gumanitarnaia geografiia: Prostranstvo i yazyk geograficheskikh obrazov* (St. Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2003), 32–54.

⁶ Ibid., 67–68. For the sake of comparison, see also E. V. [Edward] Said, *Orientalizm*, trans. Viktor Shovkun (Kyiv: Osnovy, 2001), 98.

⁷ For example, he writes “I came to Kaniv” instead of “I came from Oleshnia,” which appeared in earlier copies. See D. Abramovych, *Kyievo-pecherskyi pateryk (Vstup, tekst, prymitky)* (Kyiv: Chas, 1991), 10 (a reprint of the 1931 edition).

⁸ Cf. the sound observations on the potestative factor in establishing the names of lands in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in O. Rusyna, *Siverska zemlia u skladu Velykoho Kniazivstva Lytovskoho* (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrayiny, 1998), 35–36. As an example of a

has not yet established when these new names came into use. Nonetheless it is significant that in one of the earliest chancery registers that have come down from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, where these names could logically be expected, we do not yet find them. In that book we do encounter an extensive list of properties, dated approximately to 1440, that were distributed to the boyars by the grand duke; analogous properties in Volhynia are identified not by “land” but with reference to towns (“in Lutsk,” “in Volodymyr,” “in Kremianets,” “in Turiisk”),⁹ that is, they are associated with the notion most frequently used in the list, that of the *volost* (settled area)—the military and administrative unit from which armed service was to be rendered.

For preliminary purposes, it may be assumed that Podillia was the first to attain the status of “land” in Ruthenian texts. Scholars have assumed that the text of the Tale of Podillia (of the “Podillian Land”), which was incorporated into several so-called Belarusian-Lithuanian chronicles, was compiled in the 1430s.¹⁰ Such a precipitous “career” suggests that this Ruthenian text was influenced by official sources, in which Podillia is established very early as a distinct potestative unit. Mykhailo Hrushevsky considered that the term “Podillian Land,” which supplanted the chronicle word *Ponyzzia* (Lowland), was first used in a privilege issued by King Władysław Jagiełło in 1395.¹¹ In fact, however, the date of first mention should be pushed further back: in 1377 King Ludovic of Hungary, writing to Francesco Carrara and informing him of the transfer of the Podillian Koriatovich princes to his sovereignty, refers to their lands as “the Podillian duchy” (*ducatus Podolie*).¹² The status of “duchy” also appears indirectly in the document of 1395 that has just been mentioned—a privilege issued to Spytko of Melsztyn for the “Podillian Land” (*terra Podolie*), which is granted to him “in full ducal right” (*pleno iure ducali*).¹³

purely potestative definition of a “land” in the fourteenth century, one may adduce a missive of 1352 in which Lithuanian princes ruling the lands of Volodymyr, Lutsk, Belz, and Kholm, “peaceable” vis-à-vis the Polish king, swore loyalty to him. See *Hramoty XIV st.*, comp. M. M. Peshchak (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1974), 30.

⁹ *Lietuvos Metrika: Knyga nr 3 (1440–1498)*, ed. Lina Anužytė and Algirdas Baliulis (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 1998), 62–65.

¹⁰ V. A. Chamiarytski, *Belaruskiia letapisy iak pomniki literatury* (Minsk: Navuka i tekhnika, 1969), 97–99.

¹¹ M. S. Grushevsky, *Barskoe starostvo: Istoricheskie ocherki (XV–XVIII v.)* (Kyiv: Tipografija Universiteta Sv. Vladimira, 1894), 22–24; Mykhailo Hrushevsky, *Istoriia Ukrayny-Rusy*, vol. 4 (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1993), 88–89.

¹² Buda, 29 September 1377. Cited according to the entry in J. Kurtyka, “Repertorium podolskie: Dokumenty do 1430 r.,” *Rocznik Przemyski* 40 (2004), no. 4 (Historia): 151.

¹³ Grushevsky, *Barskoe starostvo*, 22.

Presumably it was this early certificate, augmented by the Catholic bishopric created ca. 1386 in Kamianets-Podilskyi, that gave rise to the stable tradition of identifying the “Podillian duchy,” “comprehensible” to the Western eye, with those obscure “borderlands” of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania—Volhynia and the Kyiv region. Thus, in 1429, informing an unidentified individual about the expected coronation of the grand duke of Lithuania, the papal legate writes that arrangements for this had been made “in the town of Lutsk, located on the border between Rus' and Podillia” (*in Luczica civitate, que inter confinia Russia ac Podolie sita est*).¹⁴ Podillia is also a key identifier in the depiction of this space on sixteenth-century Western maps, where the name “Podolia” generally covers the whole territory between the Dnister and the Dnipro.¹⁵ The same space is represented somewhat more narrowly on a map by the Polish cartographer Waclaw Grodecki, *Poloniae finitimarumque locorum descriptio* (Description of Poland and Its Borderlands). The date of its appearance (1558) is approximate, as the first edition has not survived, but it began to circulate more widely from 1570 thanks to its publication in the very first issue of Abraham Ortelius’s atlases, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (Antwerp, 1570). On this map the name “Podolia” is pushed southward, the northern region is marked with the name “Volhnia,” and the Dnipro region remains unnamed, although the towns of Kijovia (Kyiv), Kanijow (Kaniv), and Czirkassy (Cherkasy) are shown.¹⁶

This symbolization of geographic space by maps on which “Podillia” was identified with the whole sparsely settled territory between the Dniester and Dnipro Rivers determined the perception of the actual space. That is particularly apparent from the relations of the first papal nuncios in the Polish-Lithuanian state. Thus, in 1556 Aloiso Lippomano referred to the trans-Dnipro lands as “bordering on Podillia” (*confini della Podolia*),¹⁷ and in 1565 one of his successors, Giulio Ruggieri, located the

¹⁴ Rome, 16 August 1429: *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi, magni duci Lithuaniae, 1376–1430* (Cracow: Drukarnia Wl. Anczyca, 1882), 856.

¹⁵ Yaroslav Dashkevych calculates that there are more than two hundred such maps. See his “Skhidne Podillia na kartakh XVI st.,” in *Heohrafichnyi faktor v istorichnomu protsesi*, ed. F. P. Shevchenko et al. (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1990), 155–56. Cf. the reproductions of maps by Marco Beneventano (Rome, 1507), Martin Waldseemüller (Strasbourg, 1511 and 1513), Lorenz Fries (Vienna, 1541), Johann Honter (Basel, 1550), Giacomo Gastaldi (Venice, 1562), and others in the illustrated volume *Imago Poloniae: Dawna Rzeczpospolita na mapach, dokumentach i starodrukach w zbiorach Tomasza Niewodniczańskiego*, vol. 2, ed. Tomasz Niewodniczański (Warsaw: Agencja reklamowo-wydawnicza Arkadiusza Grzegorczyka, 2002), 19, 21, 22, 25.

¹⁶ See the reproduction in *ibid.*, 27, no. 7 (1).

¹⁷ Letter to Giovanni Carafa, written at Lowicz on 22 September 1556, in *Acta nuntiaturae Poloniae*, vol. 3, bk. 1, *Aloisius Lippomano (1555–1557)*, ed. Henricus Damianus

Volhynian town of Ostroh in Podillia (*in Podolia in una terra detta Ostrogo*)—indeed, he did so in a special note entitled “*Descriptio Regni Poloniae eiusque provinciarum.*”¹⁸ In the Kingdom of Poland itself, throughout the sixteenth century, Volhynia received separate identification, but all the lands beyond it were also identified either with “Podillia” or with Kyiv as a city, not as territories of a distinct spatial entity. At the Lublin Diet of 1569, for example, the defense of the borderlands was identified in the imagination of the Polish delegates with the defense of Volhynia and the “Podillian lands” (*Woliniowi y Podolskiem zyemiom; Wolynia i granic podolskich; krajom podolskim, wołynieckim.*).¹⁹ In arguing the need for the annexation of the Kyiv region to the Kingdom of Poland, one delegate expressed his idea as follows: “Kyiv is, in essence, the gate to all the possessions adjacent to it—Volhynia and Podillia” (*Kiovia fere sit porta omnium illarum ditionum, sibi adiacentium—Volinia et Podoliae).*²⁰

In Marcin Kromer’s book, first published in Cologne in 1577—that is, after the transfer of the Kyiv palatinate to the jurisdiction of the Kingdom of Poland—we see clear traces of the “cartographic” image modeled on Grodecki’s map (Volhynia and Podillia are shown, but there is as yet no Dnipro region, although a few towns are located there). In enumerating the “extent” (*amplitudo*) of the Commonwealth, Kromer mentions Polissia, Volhynia, and Podillia, but with reference to the Kyiv region limits himself to the observation that “Located on the Dnipro are castles and the towns of Kyiv, Kaniv and Cherkasy” (*Ad Nieprum enim sitae sunt arces et oppida Kiovia, Canovia et Circassi*).²¹

The introduction of “Ukrainian” terminology into the discourse of the Polish Crown Chancery after the creation of its “Ruthenian” department (the Ruthenian Metrica)²² in 1570 did not entail the “death of Podillia.”

Wojtyska CP (Rome, 1993), 285.

¹⁸ *Litterae nuntiorum apostolicorum historiam Ucrainae illustrantes* (1550–1850), vol. 1 (1550–1593), comp. P. Athanasius G. Welykyj OSBM (Rome, 1959), 23.

¹⁹ *Dnevnik Liublinskogo seima 1569 goda*, ed. M. O. Koialovich (St. Petersburg: Pechatnia V. Golovina, 1869), 165, 193, 197, 250, et al.

²⁰ Ibid., 403.

²¹ Martini Cromeri, *Polonia sive de situ, populis, moribus, magistratibus et republica Regni Polonici libri duo*, ed. Wiktor Czermak (Cracow: Nakładem Akademii Umiejętności, 1901), 15.

²² For a more detailed discussion, see my article “Choice of Name versus Choice of Path (The Names of Ukrainian Territory from the Late Sixteenth to the Late Seventeenth Century),” in *A Laboratory of Transnational History: Ukraine and Recent Ukrainian Historiography*, ed. Georgiy Kasianov and Philipp Ther (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2008), 117–48.

Mentions of it were either embellished with a new signifier (such as “Podillian borderlands” or “all the border castles in Kamianets, Bar, Khmilnyk, Bila Tserkva, Kyiv, and Cherkasy”)²³ or, as in the past, Podilia continued to be identified directly with the Dnipro region (*Ukraina*). For example, in a poem of 1607 the Lviv poet Szymon Szymonowicz expressed his concern about Tatar attacks as follows: “Już Podole zniszczone, ona Ukraina, / Ona matka żyźności, dóbr wszystkich dziedzina, / W popiół poszła” (Podilia has already been destroyed—this Ukraine, / This mother of fertility, this realm of all good weal / Has turned to ashes).²⁴

As we see, the cultural/geographic image of “Podillia,” which, thanks to its potestate status, was the first of the Ukrainian territories to take shape as a semantically laden entity, underwent a number of modifications between the fifteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In this regard, its first version—identification with an unknown space between two large rivers (the Dnister and the Dnipro)—undoubtedly represented an external view, while subsequent versions were given greater precision from within by closer neighbors, the Poles, by means of the “disunification” of Volhynia and, later, by the extension of the *topos* of “Ukrainism” to the lands between the Dnipro and the Dnister.

What content was imparted to this *topos* by contemporaries who did not live there themselves? As already noted, for Vilnius chancery scribes of the late fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth, the notion of *ukraina/ukrainy* was identified with the southern borderland of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania—the “distant lands.” From the viewpoint of Vilnius, these locales were considered dangerous because of the neighboring Tatars: in 1546, for instance, exempting the local nobility from contributing to the repair of the Zhytomyr castle, the grand duke explained that as “inhabitants of the borderland” they were subject to continuing material losses because of the Tatars.²⁵ Aside from the real threat of Tatar raids, there was a long tradition behind the cultural/geographic image of “dangerous territory.” After all, the *topos* of the eastern borderland as a synonym of hidden danger in European discourse had its origins in antiquity and was later strongly inspired by Christian-Islamic

²³ Compare the materials of the Diet of 1585: *Dyaryusze sejmowe r. 1585*, ed. Aleksander Czuczyński, *Scriptores rerum Polonicarum*, vol. 18 (Cracow, 1901), 321, 415.

²⁴ *Pisma polityczne z czasów rokoszu Zebrzydowskiego, 1606–1608*, vol. 1, *Poezya rokoszowa*, ed. Jan Czubek (Cracow: Nakładem Akademii Umiejętności, 1916), 316.

²⁵ *Arkhiv Yugo-Zapadnoi Rossii, sobrannyi i izdavaemyi Vremennoi komissiei dla razbora drevnikh aktov* (hereafter *Arkhiv YuZR*), no. 8, vol. 5 (Kyiv, 1907), 41. The same motivation may be encountered in many other privileges of immunity.

conflict.²⁶ With reference to the Dnipro region, we find such a reflection as early as 1320 in a letter from Pope John XXII to Kyivan Dominicans, in which he associates the difficulties of the Kyiv diocese, which had just been established (*novissimis temporibus*) “on the Ruthenian-Tatar borderland” (*in confinibus Ruthenorum et Tartarorum*).²⁷ The perception of this territory as vulnerable to Muslim invasion by definition finds expression in countless texts reflecting the view from outside, through the eyes of people who did not live there. So as not to overburden my text with examples, I shall cite only one, and a late one at that, from a publicistic work of 1618 by Krzysztof Palczowski, a nobleman from Great Poland. Arguing the “utility” of the Cossacks for the Commonwealth, he writes: “After all, there is no doubt that if there were no Cossacks there [in the Dnipro region], the Turks would establish themselves there, founding their colonies” (*Bo to nieomylna, kiedyby tam Kozaków nie było, żeby się tam Turcy sadowili abyby colonias deducerent*).²⁸

More or less in the mid-sixteenth century, the cultural/geographic image of the dangerous borderland underwent additional specification of a “civilizational” nature, so to speak. On Western maps in particular, this found expression in a new designation, “Solitudo vastissima” (The Least Inhabited Empty Spaces), for the region between the Dnipro and the Boh.²⁹ (Soon it would triumphantly establish itself in cartography in a more precise redaction, “Campi deserti” [Desert Plains]). Characteristically enough, Polish cartographers, better versed in geographic realities than their Western colleagues, did not identify the “Desert Plains” with Ukraine. For instance, on the well-known Amsterdam map of 1613 by Tomasz Makowski (the so-called Krzysztof Radziwiłł map), those plains are shown below the Dnipro Rapids and marked as “Campi deserti citra Boristhenem” and “Campi deserti infra Boristhenem,” while the Dnipro region as far as the Dnipro River itself and its rapids is marked as “Lower Volhynia” (“Volynia Ulterior”).³⁰ However, on Beauplan’s *Delineatio generalis Camporum Desertorum vulgo Ukraina cum adjacentibus provinciis* (General Delinea-

²⁶ Cf. Said, *Orientalizm*, 78–87.

²⁷ N.p., 15 December 1320: *Vetera monumenta Poloniae et Lituaniae gentiumque finitimarum historiam illustrantia*, vol. 1, *Ab Honorio PP. III usque ad Gregorium PP. XII (1217–1409)*, ed. August Theiner (Rome: Typis Vaticanis, 1860), 162.

²⁸ Krzysztof Palczowski, *O Kozakach, jeżeli ich znieść czy nie discurs* (Cracow: W drukarnie Macieja Jędrzejowczyka, 1618), no pagination.

²⁹ One of the earliest instances known to me of the use of the designation “Solitudo vastissima” appears on a map by Andrzej Pograbka (Venice, 1570), who lived in Little Poland. The name covers the territory below Cherkasy between the Dnipro and the Boh (Southern Buh). Variants of this map were included in Ortelius’s atlases after 1571.

³⁰ Cf. the reproduction in *Imago Polonia*, no. 89/1, p. 191.

tion of Desert Plains, Colloquially Ukraine, with Adjacent Provinces), published three times in Gdańsk (1648, 1650 and 1651), the “Desert Plains” are directly identified with Ukraine in the very title of the map.³¹

At present I find it difficult to say who first put the cultural stress on the “uninhabited/deserted” character of the southeastern regions of the Polish-Lithuanian state. My preliminary assumption is that this may have been associated with the birth of “European Sarmatia” in the late Renaissance. In his famous *Weltchronik* (Nuremberg, 1493), the German humanist Hartmann Schädel identified the territory of this “Sarmatia,” modeled according to ancient geographers, with the state of the Jagiellonians and defined it as “endless wastelands lying under freezing snow.” He also mentions Podillia (“the land located after Rusiia”) as a “burned-out place that has become deserted.”³² The text of another German humanist, Konrad Zeltis, written in 1494 as an augmentation of Schädel’s chronicle, stresses that the “limit” (*limes*) of Sarmatia is the Don River; that is, it extends “to the very ends of Europe” (*ad Europae usque fines*).³³ Finally, after 1517, “European Sarmatia” made a brilliant career thanks to Maciej Miechowita’s *Tractatus de duabis Sarmatiis, Asiana et Europiana* (Treatise on Two Sarmatias, Asian and European), which was published seven times in Cracow, Augsburg, Basel, and Venice in a mere quarter century (1517–42). Sebastian Münster also made use of it in the first two editions of his *Cosmographia* (1544 and 1550).³⁴

The image of the “ends of Europe,” having become established in the consciousness of the educated Western reader, was associated with obscure territories of some kind near the Dnipro and beyond—at the ends of the earth. In 1556, for example, when the citizens of the town of Ostuni (Duchy of Milan) were honoring the return of Queen Bona Sforza of Poland to her native land, they prepared a commemorative inscription on the entrance gate in which her former realm was called “the Kingdom of Sarmatia and the Empire of the Scythians [Tatars] near the Don and

³¹ See A. B. Pernal and D. F. Essar, “Hiiom Le Vasser de Boplan — viiskovyi inzhener, kartohraf, avtor,” in *Boplan i Ukraina: Zbirnyk naukovykh prats*, ed. M. H. Vavrychyn et al (Lviv: Instytut ukrainskoi arkheohrafii ta dzhereloznavstva im. M. S. Hrushevskoho, Lvivske viddilennia., 1998), 19–20.

³² Cited according to the translation of a fragment in Yu. A. Mytsyk and M. O. Kulynsky, “Istoryko-heohrafichnyi opys skhidnoslovianskykh zemel u khronitsi nimetskoho humanista Hartmana Shedelia,” in *Problemy istorychnoi heohrafii Ukrayiny*, ed. F. P. Shevchenko et al. (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1991), 122.

³³ Cited according to Wojciech Iwańczak, *Do granic wyobraźni: Norymberga jako centrum wiedzy geograficznej i kartograficznej w XV i XVI wieku* (Warsaw: DiG, 2005), 71, n. 13.

³⁴ Ibid., 96–97.

the Borysthenes” (*regnum Sarmatiae et imperium Scythes ad Tanaim et Borysthenem*).³⁵ Since the Dnipro, as noted, also marked the Tatar boundary, these territories were of course imagined as “wild”—a space that could be inhabited only by a strange breed of “borderland” dwellers with no definite cultural profile. This, indeed, is how the Zaporozhian Cossacks are characterized in the relations of the first papal nuncios: in 1578 Giovanni Caligari called them “a collective tribe of various nations—Poles, Ruthenians, Hungarians, Spaniards, Italians, etc.” (*una gente colettiva di diverse nationi, Polacchi, Russi, Ungari, Spagnoli, Italiani etc.*),³⁶ and in 1586 Carlo Gamberini, secretary to Nuncio Alberto Bolognetti, added Germans and Frenchmen to the catalogue of “nations” (*Polacchi, Tedeschi, Francesi, Spagnoli et Italiani*).³⁷

According to the logic of such conceptions, a “mixture of nations” could only be a mixed bag when it came to religion. But the “Eastern factor” prevailed, so the mixture came down to an image of the Cossacks either as entirely Muslim (as, for example, in André Thevet’s *Cosmographie universelle*, published in Paris in 1578)³⁸ or, to quote the less severe characterization in the *Descriptio veteris et novae Poloniae* (Description of Poland Old and New, Cracow, 1585) by Stanisław Sarnicki, an intellectual born in the Kholm region and educated in Europe, as people “mainly of the Muslim religion” (*religio apud eos magna ex parte Machometana*).³⁹ With the passage of time, thanks to the heroization of Cossack expeditions against the Tatar and Turkish possessions on the Black Sea coast, Western literature would “rehabilitate” the Cossacks as Christians,⁴⁰ but the topos of “mixture” would prove more vital. For example, in his *Histoire universelle des guerres de Turcs* (Paris, 1608), de Bartenon offers his readers the following exotic image of the Cossacks as dwellers “at the edge of Europe”: “These people have come of age as laborers, like the Scythians; they have been tempered by all kinds of hardships, like the Huns; they are as warlike as the Goths, as tanned by the sun as the Indians, and as cruel as the Sarmatians. They are lions in

³⁵ Mikołaj Radziwiłł “the Orphan” noted the inscription in his pilgrimage diary. See M. K. Radziwiłł “Sierotka,” *Podróż do Ziemi Świętej, Syrii i Egiptu, 1582–1584*, ed. Leszek Kukulski (Warsaw, 1962), 232.

³⁶ *Litterae nuntiorum apostolicorum historiam Ucrainae illustrantes*, 105.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁸ Dmytro Nalyvaiko, *Kozatska khrystyianska respublika (Zaporozka Sich u zakhidnoevropeiskikh literaturnykh pamiatkakh)* (Kyiv: Osnovy, 1992), 50.

³⁹ Cited according to Hrushevsky, *Istoriia Ukrainsk-Rusy*, 7: 389.

⁴⁰ See the survey of relevant texts dating from the last quarter of the sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century in Nalyvaiko, *Kozatska khrystyianska respublika*, 63–98.

pursuit of their enemy; they resemble the Turks in cunning; they are like the Scythians in fury; they are Christians by their faith.”⁴¹

In Polish literary discourse, as is well known, the “Desert Plains” would become the “Wild Plains” (*Dzikie Pola*), but its “inventors” were not, of course, Western cartographers. It would appear that this notion became a kind of symbiosis between the cartographic image of “desolation” and the habitual use of “plains” as a name for the steppe portion of the territory between the Dnipro and the Dnister. The latter tradition is well displayed in military relations about armed encounters with the Tatars. In 1550, for instance, the hero of the Podillian borderlands, Bernard Pretwicz, who does not yet know the word “Ukraine,” tells of the guard details that he posted “on the Plain between the roads” (*na Polu między szlaki*).⁴² An analogous notion is employed by an anonymous Pole who, in the mid-1560s, left irate observations in the margins of Giacomo Gastaldi’s map *Poloniae et Hungariae nova tavola*, which was added to a Venetian edition of Ptolemy’s *Geography* (1562). Commenting on the errors committed here, he refers to the steppe territories between the Boh and Dnipro as the “Lithuanian Plains,” and those between the Boh and Dnister as the “Crown Plains.”⁴³ Nor does the learned Michael the Lithuanian yet know of the “wildness” of the Plains. In his treatise of 1550 *On the Customs of the Tatars, Lithuanians, and Muscovites*, he refers to the “most distant” (*ultimis*) territories of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as “the lands of Volhynia, Podillia, Kyiv, Siver, and the plains regions” (*terras Volinia, Podolia, Kijoviae, Sievvier atque campestres regiones*).⁴⁴

It was indeed from the components of this *topos* of “wildness/mixture,” born of the scholar’s study, that the new cultural/geographic image of Ukraine and the borderland took shape in the Commonwealth itself. Emerging from the pages of learned treatises into broader use, it underwent correction and modification according to a simpler scheme, becoming charged with emotionally accessible content and examples. From the late sixteenth century, it was Cossackdom that provided the greatest stimulus for this, and it is telling that in observations about it we may discern genuine information cheek by jowl with efforts to fit Cossackdom into the cultural/geographic image of “the ends of Eu-

⁴¹ Cited in *ibid.*, 98.

⁴² Cited according to the text of Pretwicz’s note as published by Andrzej Tomczak in *Studia i materiały do historii wojskowości* (Warsaw) 6, pt. 2 (1960): 346.

⁴³ Ya. Dashkevych, “Pokraini notatky pro ukrainski stepy u ‘Heohrafii’ Ptolemeia 1562 r.,” in *Boplan i Ukraina*, 83.

⁴⁴ Cited according to the reprint in *Arkhiv istoriko-iuridicheskikh svedenii, otnosящихся до Rossii*, ed. S. D. Shestakov, bk. 2b, sec. 5 (Moscow, 1854), 44.

rope," which has just been mentioned. For example, there can be no doubt that the actual ethnic composition of Cossackdom was known to Commonwealth officials, if only from one of the first Cossack registers of 1581, in which recruits from Ukraine and Belarus accounted for eighty-two percent of the total, while the remainder were drawn in small proportions from Muscovy, Poland, and Lithuania.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, right up to the 1620s, when the Cossack problem began to be identified with Ruthenian separatism, official sources defined the Cossacks as "steppe rabble" and "a mixture of nations." The confessional profile of that "mixture" had to be hybrid by definition; hence the engagement of the Zaporozhian Host in the conflict between the Orthodox and Uniate Churches⁴⁶ drew fairly ironic commentary from their opponents. Thus, accusing Orthodox hierarchs of manipulating Cossackdom, Archimandrite Antonii Seliava of the Uniate Holy Trinity Monastery in Vilnius, who later became a metropolitan, wrote in his polemical brochure *Antelenchus* (Vilnius, 1620) that the Cossacks, as knightly men, deserved the praise of the whole Christian world, but discussions on matters of faith were none of their business for it was not fitting "to dress Cossacks in doctors' birettas" (*Kozaków ubierać w birety doktorskie*).⁴⁷ An even more ironic comment on Cossack piety was rendered by a countryman of theirs, the Orthodox Ruthenian Adam Kysil: "reason, piety, religion, liberties, wives, and children—in their [the Cossack rabble's] heads, all this rides with them down the Dnipro" (*ratię, pietą, religię, wolności, żony, dzieci, wszystko to w ich głowie z nimi po Dnieprze płyną*).⁴⁸

Remarks on Ukraine's dubious reputation as a land of license and misrule are not limited to observations on Cossackdom. A characteristic example is the "file of scoundrels" assembled between 1625 and 1639 by Walerian Nekanda-Trepka, a resident of Cracow who never tired of unmasking "false nobles." Not knowing the current whereabouts of one of the "false nobles" he had uncovered, Nekanda simply waved toward the

⁴⁵ Serhii Plokhy, *The Cossacks and Religion in Early Modern Ukraine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 22–23. The basis for this calculation is also discussed there.

⁴⁶ Examined in detail *ibid.*, 103–23.

⁴⁷ *Antelenchus, to jest odpis na skrypt ... Elenchus nazwany*, cited according to the reprint in *Arkhiv YuZR*, no. 1, vol. 8, vyp. 1 (Kyiv, 1914), 719.

⁴⁸ N.p., ca. August 1636: *Korespondencja Stanisława Koniecpolskiego*, ed. Agnieszka Biedrzycka (Cracow: Societas, 2005), 317. For comments on this text, see Frank E. Sysyn, *Between Poland and the Ukraine: The Dilemma of Adam Kysil, 1600–1653* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1985), 80–81; and Plokhy, *The Cossacks and Religion*, 142.

east: “He has gone off somewhere to Podillia, or to *Ukraina*.⁴⁹ It is telling that Nekanda habitually dispatches villains, robbers, horse thieves, and other such types “to *Ukraina*,”⁵⁰ treating those lands as if they were beyond the pale of the normal world. Such conceptions are corroborated by yet another response—a complaint of 1640 by an apothecary from the town of Brody against the Bratslav nobleman Stanisław Czarnota, who had publicly abused him. The apothecary characterizes Czarnota’s impolite behavior as “a habit of tweaking respectable people” brought from Ukraine (*on pryzjachawszy z Ukrainy ... tu z zwykłości swojej szcypać uzciiwe ludzi*).⁵¹

Finally, it is worth mentioning one more exotic component of discourse about Ukraine among people who did not live there themselves. This was the representation of the borderlands as fabulously endowed by nature, initiated in the last third of the fifteenth century by Jan Długosz.⁵² (Scholars associate this *topos* with Renaissance techniques of imitating Virgil and therefore call it the “myth of Arcadia.”) According to Długosz, in particular, the land in Podillia is so rich that there is no need for sowing—grain grows by itself, and the Dnipro near Kyiv has so many fish that they are used as fodder for livestock.⁵³ Numerous and rather farfetched variations on the vision of Ukraine as a promised land, flowing with milk and honey, are to be encountered repeatedly in the works of Maciej Miechowita (1517), Michael the Lithuanian (1550), Alessandro Guagnini (1578), and others.

* * *

To what extent did the cultural/geographic image presented above coincide with the “self-portrait,” that is, the conceptions of those who regarded themselves as “people of the borderlands” about the space they inhabited? The sources, unfortunately, are not rich in such information, but something is to be found nonetheless. As the earliest example, we may cite a declaration of the Volhynian gentry to government inspectors who came to Lutsk in 1545 to describe the castle in that town and the service obligations on noble estates. Realizing that such a census boded nothing good, the nobles refused to provide the requisite data on the

⁴⁹ Walerian Nekanda Trepka, *Liber generationis plebeiorum* (“*Liber Chamorum*”), ed. Rafał Leszczyński (Wrocław: Zakład narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1995), 302 (no. 1477).

⁵⁰ Ibid., 88 (no. 183), 91 (no. 200), 137 (no. 458), 182 (no. 739), 237 (no. 1090).

⁵¹ Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Lviv, f. 24, op. 1, spr. 5, ark. 10^v.

⁵² Cf., inter alia, Piotr Borek, *Szlakami dawnej Ukrainy: Studia staropolskie* (Cracow: Collegium Columbinum, 2002), 15–45.

⁵³ Ibid., 20–21.

grounds that they could not be reduced to the status of the *szlachta* in other lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Their borderland location was used as an argument, but the “border” was presented in their declaration not only as a barrier against the Tatars but as everything beyond Volhynia: the nobles complained that they were living on the “Liakh border,” rode to battle against Muscovy, and, finally, that they did not “dismount their horses” whether or not there was a truce with the Tatars.⁵⁴ As we see, the “self-portrait” is modeled on the principle of a “besieged fortress,” surrounded on every side by “borders,” while the inner space—their own territory—takes the form of a self-sufficient entity different from the other territories of the state.

We also encounter the characteristics of such a worldview later. Such content may be discerned in the well-known declaration of Prince Kostiantyn Vyhnevetsky at the Lublin Diet of 1569. Having joined the Kingdom of Poland, Volhynia must obtain special status, for, as the prince argues, “we are a nation of such honor that we yield nothing [*naprzód nic nie damy*] to any nation on earth.”⁵⁵ Concordant with this declaration is a letter of 29 March 1569 from the rank-and-file Volhynian gentry addressed to the king: after the usual courtesies, they warn the Poles not to force “us, respectable people equal in faith and honor to them in every way,” into the Union.⁵⁶ The subsequent zealous struggle for “our Volhynian rights,”⁵⁷ which lasted until the mid-seventeenth century, clearly confirms this sense of their self-sufficiency. It also seems significant that the Volhynians, who situationally still identify themselves with *Ukraina* from time to time in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, refer to themselves as a separate entity even when involved in a common cause—the struggle against the Union—in which the “Ruthenian nation” presents a united front. They write “in Volhynia, in Ukraine, in Podillia,” “throughout Lithuania, Rus’, Volhynia, and Ukraine,” “all Volhynia and Ukraine,” and so on.⁵⁸ Finally, as Frank Sysyn has convincingly shown, it was Volhynia in particular that became

⁵⁴ *Lytovska metryka: Knyha 561: Revizii ukrainskykh zamkiv 1545 roku*, ed. Volodymyr Kravchenko (Kyiv: Instytut ukraïnskoi arkheohrafii, 2005), 124–29.

⁵⁵ *Dnevnik Liublinskogo seima 1569 goda*, 382.

⁵⁶ Karol Mazur, “Nieznanana petycja szlachty wołyńskiej do króla w dobie sejmu lubelskiego 1569 r.,” *Sotsium: Almanah sotsialnoi istorii* (Kyiv), vyp. 2 (2003): 56.

⁵⁷ See Petro Kulakovskiy, *Kantseliariia Ruskoi (Volynskoi) metryky 1569–1673 rr.: Studiia z istorii ukraïnskoho rehionalizmu v Rechi Pospolityii* (Ostroh and Lviv, 2002), 54–70.

⁵⁸ These citations are taken from Meletii Smotrytsky’s works *Verificatia niewinności* and *Obrona verificaciey* (both 1621) and *Elenchus pism uszczypliwych* (1622). Cited according to the reprint in *Arkhiv YuZR*, no. 1, vol. 7, pp. 324, 376.

the “fatherland” of Ruthenian regionalism—corporate solidarity and the concomitant ideology professed by the local elite—in the 1630s and 1640s.⁵⁹ The stimulus for the gentry’s “conceptualization” of its territory as a region with unique characteristics and interests was the formation in 1635 of the Chernihiv palatinate, which was granted the same legal status as that given to the Kyiv, Volhynian, and Bratslav palatinates by the Union of Lublin in 1569. As Sysyn correctly establishes, these palatinates, aside from specific legal and administrative characteristics, also differed from the other lands of the Kingdom of Poland in ethnic composition and dominant confession, which ultimately promoted the formation of two entwined sentiments—regional (“Ruthenian”) patriotism and a feeling of cultural and religious commonality, of belonging to the “ancient Ruthenian nation.”⁶⁰

Given the lack of appropriate sources, it is unfortunately more difficult to judge how residents of the Kyiv region perceived the land they inhabited. Still, there are grounds for the cautious assumption that they, too, modeled it as exclusive. This is suggested by a series of observations dating from the late sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth, in which they reserved the notion of “Ukraine” for their own territory. No one else was admitted to the “Ukrainian club,” and all that lay beyond “Ukraine” was considered of lesser value or distant and obscure.⁶¹ Let us compare how distinctively the author of the so-called Kyiv Chronicle (compiled ca. 1616, probably by the Kyiv burgher Kyrylo Ivanovych) represents the region from which the False Dmitrii arrived in Kyiv: “And he came from Volhynia, there is no telling from where.”⁶² In “Epicedion” (1585), a poem of mourning on the death of the Kyivan castellan Prince Mykhailo Vyhnevetsky, written by his servant Zhdan Bilytsky, the author refers to the Kyiv region as “Poddnieprska Ukraina” (Dnipro Ukraine), whose inhabitants (*poddnieprzanie*) are clearly exalted above the “Volhynians” and “Podillians” because they protect them, as

⁵⁹ For an analysis of the differences between the nature of regionalism in Western Europe and the Commonwealth, particularly Ukraine, see Frank E. Sysyn, “Regionalism and Political Thought in Seventeenth-Century Ukraine: The Nobility’s Grievances at the Diet of 1641,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 6, no. 2 (1982): 167–71.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 172, 174–80.

⁶¹ For a more detailed discussion, see my article “Zhyttieprostir versus identychnist ukrainskoho shliakhtyча XVII st. (na prykladi Yana/Yoakyma Yerlycha),” in *Ukraina XVII st.: Suspilstvo, filosofia, kultura*, ed. Larysa Dovha and Nataliia Yakovenko (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2005).

⁶² Published in V. I. Ulianovsky and N. M. Yakovenko, “Kyivskyi litopsys pershoi chverti XVII st.,” *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, 1989, no. 2: 107–20; no. 5: 103–14; citation in no. 3: 109.

well as the whole kingdom, from the Tatars.⁶³ It is noteworthy that this territory has its own “center” in the poem—events are localized and described in such a way that the “famous Dnipro” (*slawny Dniepr; slawny Borysthenes*) is constantly at the center of attention.⁶⁴ A similar perception of the Dnipro region as a territory with its own “center” is to be encountered later, in Yoakym Yerlych’s diary: if a hurricane arises somewhere, in Yerlych it proceeds directly to Kyiv; if robbers appear on the roads, the author’s field of vision takes in only those roads that lead to Kyiv; if a “band of rogues,” that is, the Cossack Host, gathers, then the point of departure is again Kyiv, and so on.⁶⁵

It is quite likely that the exclusivity of the cultural/geographic “self-portrait” of inhabitants of the Kyiv region was determined in some measure by the “historical memory” of Kyiv principality. Although there is too little corroboration of this, one should not overlook particular mentions, such as the one in which the petty noble Olekhno Zakusylo declares to the Volhynians in 1595 that he comes from the “Ovruch castle of *Kyiv principality*.⁶⁶ Proof of the vitality of the perception of this region as a kind of “extension” of Kyiv principality is also furnished by a later mention in a complaint of 1621 by the Orthodox metropolitan of Kyiv, Yov Boretsky, against the hierarchs of the Uniate Church: in substantiating the justice of his claims, Boretsky appeals *inter alia* to the rights and freedoms of the Orthodox community, which were supposedly ratified by the “constitution of the 1569 union of *Kyiv principality* with the Crown.”⁶⁷

Finally, it is clear that a certain role must have been played by the fact that as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century inhabitants of the Dnipro region had begun to be called “Ukrainians” (*ukraintsi*) in soldiers’ vernacular, which served in its own way to associate the sym-

⁶³ The poem was printed in Cracow in 1585 and reprinted in an appendix to A. V. Storozhenko, *Stefan Batorii i dnepruvskie kazaki* (Kyiv, 1904), 163–220. For substantiation of Bilytsky’s authorship, see my *Paralelnyi svit: Doslidzhennia z istoriui uavlen ta idei v Ukrainsi XVI–XVII st.* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2002), 149.

⁶⁴ Myroslav Trofymuk, “Ukrainska polskomovna poema ‘Epitsedion … Mykhailovi Vyshnevetskomu …’ (Dzhereloznavcha studiia),” in *Do dzherel: Zbirnyk naukovykh prats na poshanu Oleha Kupchynskoho z nahody ioho 70-richchia*, ed. Ihor Hyrych et al (Kyiv and Lviv: Instytut Ukrainskoi arkheohrafii ta dzhereloznavstva im. M. S. Hrushevskoho, 2004), 292–93.

⁶⁵ Yakovenko, “Zhytieprostir versus identychnist ukrainskoho shliakhtycha,” 485.

⁶⁶ Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Kyiv, f. 25, op. 1, spr. 46, ark. 118^v.

⁶⁷ The text of the complaint was published by Rev. Yurii Mytsyk in *Zapysky Naukovoho tovarystva im. T. Shevchenka* 225 (1993): 325–27. Serhii Plokhy (*The Cossacks and Religion*, 158) has also drawn attention to this mention of “Kyiv principality.”

bolism of the dangerous borderland exclusively with them. Among early instances of the common use of this word, one may note its appearance in 1607 in the diary of Mikołaj Scibor Marchocki, a soldier born in Little Poland: “came from Kyivan Ukraine, dispatched by Prince Roman Ruzhynsky (Rużyński), with a thousand Ukrainian men [z tysiącem człowieka Ukraniów].”⁶⁸ Later there would be more frequent mentions of “Ukrainians,” but they would long continue to be associated with catalogues of armed formations that participated in one combat operation or another. Unfortunately, the lack of appropriate sources from the milieu of the “Ukrainians” themselves makes it impossible to determine whether the word was their own name for themselves or imposed from outside.

* * *

To sum up, it seems justifiable to conclude with a good deal of certainty that the “portrait” of *Ukraina* as a borderland differed quite substantially in the perception of those who did not live there from the “self-portrait,” that is, the conceptions of “borderland people” about the space they inhabited. What strikes one most clearly is that for the outside observer the cultural/geographic image of “Ukraine” was correlated not with a particular territory, but with the amorphous “ends of Europe.” These were marked by the topos of a cultural border beyond which there extended a hostile Muslim East, concrete manifestations of which were discerned in the hybrid population and legitimate “disorderliness,” that is, traits that were supposed to characterize lands of dubious reputation by definition. One of the components of this perception is undoubtedly the above-mentioned “Arcadian myth” of incredible fertility—after all, the utopian “happy Arcadia” was supposed to be located somewhere outside the bounds of culturally domesticated space. However, from the perspective of those who inhabited the “borderlands,” the space in which they lived appeared, first of all, to be fragmented into self-sufficient units, so much so that they were even closed to outsiders. Secondly, the barrier against the East was perceived here not as a demonized threat, but as a fact of everyday life. Thirdly and finally, the image of their own territory was never associated with “wildness” or “desolation” nor, still less, with a “lost Arcadia.”

Translated by Myroslav Yurkevich

⁶⁸ M. Scibor Marchocki, *Historia wojny moskiewskiej*, published by the editorial board of *Orędownik* (Poznań, 1841), 9.