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From Indifference to Obsession: Russian Claim to Kyiv History in Travel Literature of the 18th–early 19th Century

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Abstract
In this article, I discuss a relatively recent development of Russian interest in Kyiv as a place with symbolic and historical significance for Russian history, which makes it a desirable target in an ongoing war. I trace the changing attitude of Russian travelers towards Kyiv's history from the mid-eighteenth to the early nineteenth century. Earlier generations of visitors came to Kyiv primarily to visit holy places, with no knowledge of the city's historical significance, and because it was a more affordable alternative to travel abroad. However, at the end of the eighteenth century, after Catherine II's royal visit, the publication of guidebooks, and the ascend of history as a discipline, and interest among Russian educated elites, Kyiv's past became an obsession for many Russian travelers. Their travel accounts were motivated by a search for the past glory of Kyiv. For Russian travelers and authorities, history became one of the key means of appropriation of Kyiv, with a new generation of travelers searching for material evidence connecting Kyivan Rus to the Russian past. However, they were unable to find much material evidence and often used their imagination to present Kyiv as a site of Kyivan Rus history, ignoring the city's non-Russian heritage.

Key Words: history of Kyiv, travel literature, travelogues, eighteenth century, nineteenth century, travelers in Kyiv, Ukraine in Russian Empire.

Kyiv became the primary target of the Russian invasion not only because it is the capital of Ukraine, but also due to its symbolic and historical significance for the Russian educated public. On December 26, 2022, a Russian propagandist Margarita Simonian made the false claim: "I want people in Ukraine to know that I do not know a single person in Russia [...] including [...] Putin Vladimir Vladimirovich, who would enjoy what is happening. [...] Believe me, we don't like it, this is sad for us. Believe me. Shoigu [Russian Defense Minister] sits in his office and knows that the Kyiv Cave Monastery (*Kievo-PechOrskaia lavra*) is there."[1]

The history of Kyiv, like that of Ukraine (or at least its Left-bank part), was not regarded as a part of Russian history until the late eighteenth century. According to Ukrainian historian Oleksii Tolochko, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was the period "when the Russians did not consider 'Ukraine' an integral part of their

1 See video with Simonian's statement, for example, on web-media *Obozrevatel*: https://news.obozrevatel.com/ukr/russia/propagandistka-simonyan-zayavila-scho-rosiyani-bomblyat-ukrainu-bez-zadovolennya-video.htm, accessed on 12.02.2023.

own identity, and Ukrainian history was not seen as a part of the great Russian history."[2] Although some territories became part of the Russian Empire in the second half of the seventeenth century, they were not internalized as inherently Russian lands. For over a century, the Hetmanate maintained most of its autonomy. The gradual loss of this autonomy under Catherine II coinciding with the annexation of parts of Poland (including Right-bank Ukraine) and Crimean Khanate, led to the complete absorption of Ukraine by the Russian Empire. Centralization and unification encouraged Russians to become more familiar with all the annexed territories.

In this article, I will discuss how Kyiv became a significant attraction for historical tourism in the second half of the eighteenth century, turning from a minor destination for Russian educated travelers into a prominent one. Several historians and literary scholars–Oleksii Tolochko, Serhiy Bilenky, and Inna Bulkina–have examined the allure of Kyiv's history for Russian travelers.[3] In the second part of my study, I will further explore this topic. However, the situation "before" has not yet received sufficient attention. Up until the end of the eighteenth century, travelers to Kyiv had no interest in its history. My goal is to trace this shift from indifference to obsession with Kyiv's history. I will figure out what drew Russian travelers to the city; what they sought to find there; which attractions they visited; which historical sites (if any) interested them the most and why; and how they incorporated Kyiv's historical attractions within the broader Russian imperial context.

From indifference…

By the late eighteenth century, the practice of travel writing was still rather new for Russian travelers. They began to visit Western countries *en masse* in the Petrine era and some adopted the European tradition of writing a description of their travels, though early accounts were primarily interested in holy objects and lacked curiosity about other aspects of life.[4] However, in the second half of the eighteenth century, Russian travelers began to demonstrate at least some interest in the way of life in

2 O. P. Tolochko, "Kyevo-ruska spadshchyna v istorychnii dumtsi Ukrainy pochatku XIX st." ["The heritage of Kyivan Rus in historical thought of Ukraine of the early 19th century"], in V. F. Verskiuk, V. M. Horobets, O. P. Tolochko, *Ukraina i Rosiia v istorychnii retrospektyvi* [*Ukraine and Russia in historical retrospective*] (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2004), 274.

3 See ibid., 318–31; Serhiy Bilenky, *Imperial Urbanism in the Borderlands: Kyiv, 1800–1905* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017); I. Bulkina, "'Monakh byl putevoditelem nashim…': Kiev kontsa XVIII–nachala XIX vv. glazami puteshestvennikov" ["'A monk was our guide…' Kiev of the late 18th–early 19th century through the eyes of the travelers"], in *Putevoditel' kak semioticheskiy ob'iekt. Sbornik statej* [*A guidebook as a semiotic object. A collection of essays*], ed. by L. Kiseleva, 240–62 (Tartu: Tartu Ulikooli Kirjastus, 2008).

4 Andreas Schönle, *Authenticity and Fiction in the Russian Literary Journey, 1790–1840* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard UP, 2000), 2.

other places. This period also saw a dramatic rise in domestic travel within the Russian Empire,[5] initially driven by greater ease of travel and lower costs. Before the late 1790s, Russian travelers did not actively explore or discover new places within their own empire. This lack of interest is evident in the examples of three early travel descriptions of Kyiv that I will examine. These accounts are all rather short (no more than a few pages), sketchy, and lacking ~~in~~ a genuine interest in the city. Two of them–by clergyman Dobrynin and Princess Dashkova–are travel accounts from memoirs written decades after the travel (by coincidence both visited Kyiv almost simultaneously, in the summer of 1768, but Dobrynin described it in 1787 and Dashkova only in 1805). This may partly explain the sketchy nature of the descriptions, but the third author, playwright Fonvizin, kept a diary of his 1786 voyage, though even his notes on his stay in Kyiv were brief.

One of the earliest accounts of travel to Kyiv was written by Gavriil Dobrynin, a Russian clergyman from Sievsk. Dobrynin visited Kyiv in 1768 at the age of sixteen, but he did not write about it until much later in his memoirs, which were published in 1787. In the part of his memoirs that includes an account of travel to Kyiv, he mainly focuses on his memories about the bishop of Sievsk and Briansk, Kirill Fliorinskii, who had initiated the travel to Kyiv, and whom Dobrynin served at the time.

Fliorinskii was of Ukrainian Cossack origin, from the small town of Baryshivka in Kyiv governorate. He had a wide circle of acquaintances in Ukraine, particularly in Kyiv, where he had studied at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and served as a chorister in St. Michael's Golden Dome Monastery. It was during his time as a chorister that he was invited to Saint Petersburg, where he began his career in Russia.[6] In the summer of 1768, bishop Kirill Fliorinskii decided to take a trip to Kyiv and stay there for about two weeks with all of his clergy and servants. Dobrynin noted that "The travel was very pleasant in regard to crowdedness and good weather."[7]

While Gavriil Dobrynin's travel account to Kyiv in 1768 was mainly focused on bishop Fliorinskii, we can still glean some details about the travel and Kyiv. The Bishop led the group and often stayed in monasteries, while his escorts followed behind. They passed through Baturyn and stayed in Nizhyn and Kozelets' before reaching Brovary on the Left Bank of the Dnieper. From there, Fliorinskii gazed at Kyiv: "As to a magnet on the north, he turned his eyes to Kyiv, sometimes accompanying this with a sigh," as his eyes filled with longing for his young years spent in the city.[8] Although Dobrynin

5 See ibid., 15; Sara Dickinson, *Breaking Ground: Travel and National Culture in Russia from Peter I to the Era of Pushkin* (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2006), 16, 105; Derek Offord, *Journeys to a Graveyard: Perceptions of Europe in Classical Russian Travel Writing* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 16–7.

6 G. I. Dobrynin, "Istinnoie poviestvovanie, ili zhizn' Gavriila Dobrynina, im samim napisannaia, 1752–1827" ["Truthful narrative, or the life of Gavriil Dobrynin written by himself, 1752–1827"], *Russkaia starina* 2 (1871): 140; "Kirill (Florinskii ili Fliorinskii)," in *Russkiy biograficheskiy slovar'*, vol. 8 (St. Petersburg and Moscow, 1897), 662.

7 Dobrynin, "Istinnoie poviestvovanie," 144.

8 Ibid., 147–8.

did not have any expectations, he was impressed during their two-week stay in Kyiv by the catacombs of the Cave Monastery. Even though later travelers typically described the catacombs as dark and gloomy, Dobrynin found them to be a source of "unimaginable pleasure."[9] Of almost 200 uncorrupted bodies of the Cave Monastery's saints, it was an innocent infant killed by King Herod that left a lasting impression on Dobrynin. He saw it as proof of Judea's king's wrongdoings. The local saints did not impress him enough to even mention their names or evoke a sense of pride in the past glory of the Orthodox Church.

The remainder of his brief account of their stay in Kyiv consists of a record of the places visited by Bishop Fliorinskii. Rather than staying in one location, he and his entourage were invited to stay in at least two monasteries: first in the Cave Monastery and then in St. Michaels's Golden Dome Monastery. In Dobrynin's account, Kyiv is represented as a network of church hierarchs with whom Kirill Fliorinskii had past and present connections. He was invited to participate in church services at various locations,[10] and he and his men were sometimes invited to dinner by influential people such as the governor of Kyiv or the Metropolitan of Kyiv, who welcomed them to his residence on the grounds of St. Sophia Cathedral. The final visit Dobrynin mentions was to the Kyiv Brotherhood Monastery and Academy. Even in Dobrynin's earlier accounts, this place was associated with scholarship and learning. Therefore, his primary memory of the visit to "the Brotherhood Schooling Monastery," as he calls it, was not of the place itself, but of a dispute between Fliorinskii and local professors, as well as the bishop's story about his past conflict with one of his teachers.

From Dobrynin's and Fliorinskii's visit to Kyiv, and Dobrynin's subsequent description of the trip, a curious picture emerges. Paradoxically, there is little mention of pilgrimage, holy places, or veneration of the saints, despite the presumed main purpose of the journey. Perhaps, for Dobrynin, the primary motivation was to observe his master in his natural setting, a city where Fliorinskii had many connections and old acquaintances. The city itself and its inhabitants did not interest Dobrynin, and he made no mention of "the Other." Dobrynin's only encounter with Kyiv dwellers was through the various clergymen they visited in churches and monasteries. Although these visits allowed him to experience all three parts of Kyiv - Pechersk, Old Kyiv, and Podil - Dobrynin was unaware of their names and ignorant of the city's history. Even before arriving in Kyiv, Dobrynin regarded it as a city of scholarship and learning, primarily because his master had received his education there, and because Fliorinskii once complimented Dobrynin, saying that he would be "smarter than any Kyiv student" under his tutelage[11]. However, when Dobrynin visited the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, he showed no interest in the place itself, did not even know its proper name, but only

9 Ibid., 148.

10 As we learn at the end of this account, this caused scandal because the bishop often could not control himself and was shouting and swearing at people, probably because of some mental condition he suffered, which eventually led to his dismissal. See ibid., 150.

11 Ibid., 142.

regarded it as a place where "Kyiv students" received their education. Another preconceived notion Dobrynin had of Kyiv was that it was a city of miracles. When he and his fellow servants lagged their master on the road to Brovary, an incident occurred in which two servants–one of whom was drunk and the other suffering from fever–were beaten by couriers. After the incident, the drunkard sobered up and the fever subsided, leading Dobrynin to joke that they needed those lashes that cured drunkenness and fever and that the couriers were "Kyiv miracle-makers who knew that two Stepans needed their cure."[12] Even so, while in Kyiv, Dobrynin, paid no attention to the miracle-making relics of local saints. Still, his final words about Kyiv contained the phrase "God-saved city". He came to Kyiv with the idea that it was a city associated with education and religion, but not with history. He left without any new understanding or impression of the city, remaining insulated in the religious world of monasteries, clergy, church services, etc.

Princess Ekaterina Dashkova, a close friend of Catherine II, the first woman to chair the Russian Academy of Sciences and become a member of the American Philosophical Society, was a passionate traveler and left two travelogues in the form of letters describing her voyage to England in 1770 and to Scotland in 1777[13]. Although she traveled extensively, she only provided a general account of her other travels in her memoirs, which were written as late as 1805. In 1768, the same year as Dobrynin's visit, she also traveled to Kyiv. However, her account of this visit was written almost forty years later, which explains why it is very brief and provides even fewer details than Dobrynin's. Her focus was on other aspects of the visit.

Dashkova visited Kyiv in 1768 as a local substitute for her desired European journey, which she was not given permission to undertake by the empress. She declared that one reason she was satisfied with this journey was its affordability. Like Dobrynin, she visited Kyiv in the summer, but unlike him, she did not mention anything about the route she took. Although she did not describe where she stayed in Kyiv, she noted that she met the governor of Kyiv, Voieiskov, who was a relative of her late husband, every day. The old man acted as her guide to the Caves Monastery, the most esteemed guide imaginable. Writing about the caves, Dashkova, a worldly lady and an epitome of the Russian Enlightenment, did not manifest any religious awe. All she had to say about this place fits into one sentence: "These cellars [*podvaly*] contain relics of saints who were dead for several centuries and for some miraculous reason were not corrupted." Dashkova mentioned that her high-ranking guide took her to the cathedral of the Caves Monastery, which was "remarkable for its ancient mosaics on the walls."[14]

12 Ibid., 147.

13 "Puteshestvie odnoi Rossiiskoi znatnoi Gospozhi, po nekotorym Aglinskim provintsiiam: Pis'mo k drugu," *Opyt trudov Vol'nogo rossiiskogo sobraniia* 2 (1775): 105–44; "Le Petit tour dans les highlands," in Cross, E. G., "Poezdki Kniagini E. R. Dashkovoi v Velikobritaniiu (1770–1780 gg.) i ee 'Nebol'shoe puteshestvie v gornuiu Shotlandiiu' (1777)," *XVIII vek* 19 (1995): 239–68.

14 "Zapiski khiagini Dashkovoy" ["Notes of the princess Dashkova"], *Russkaia starina* 4 (1906): 38–9.

However, she probably confused it for another cathedral, St. Sophia's, which has remarkable ancient mosaics. In Dashkova's memoirs, Kyivan churches and cathedrals are nameless; they have some remarkable mosaics and frescoes, but this is all she could remember. Even at the time of writing her memoirs, Kyiv did not seem to be associated with any sacredness or historical significance in her mind.

However, when it came to education, Dashkova had a soft spot for scientific and educational institutions and projects, so she could not ignore the Kyiv Academy. Unlike Dobrynin, who mainly remembered the interaction of his master with the Academy's professors, Dashkova was impressed with the students. She had a lasting memory of them gathering in groups in the evenings and wandering the streets, singing psalms and hymns under the windows of city dwellers who threw money to them. Her other statement about the Kyiv Academy made it sound as if she was claiming its heritage to Russia. This emphasis can be explained by the timing of writing in the early nineteenth century, when the construction of Russian national identity was already at work, as opposed to the cosmopolitan mindset of the previous era. According to Sara Dickinson, Dashkova "refrains from explicitly characterizing herself as a Russian or ontologically differentiating "the" Russian from "the" Western European" in her travel letters.[15] However, in her memoirs, she makes a distinction between "us," meaning the Russians, and "them," meaning the Europeans, even in the short account of her travel to Kyiv. She writes: "The ray of science was brought to Kyiv from Greece before it shone over many of the European peoples who are now so generously lavishing the name 'barbarian' on my compatriots. Here [in the Kyiv Academy] they even have a notion of Newton's philosophy which the Roman Catholic clergy did not want to allow in France."[16] This high esteem of the Academy's achievements was inflated and outdated. It had its high time in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, but by the time of Dashkova's visit, the Academy was in crisis, lagging and struggling to adjust its curriculum to new tendencies in secular education.[17] But for Dashkova, the very existence of the Kyiv Academy, which for a century provided Russia with educated clergy and bureaucrats because Russia lacked such an educational institution of its own, was evidence that her compatriots were not barbarians.

The last traveler from this early cohort was Denis Fonvizin, a celebrated Russian writer and author of two famous comedies, *The Brigadier* (1769) and *The Minor* (1781). Although a popular writer, Fonvizin did not belong to the top strata of Russian society: He was neither clergy like Fliorinskii nor an aristocrat like Princess Daskova, but rather represented a thin stratum of educated professionals. Like Dashkova, he was an experienced traveler. He briefly visited Germany in 1762–63, made a longer journey around Western Europe in 1777, spent time in Italy in 1784–85, and finally visited

15 Dickinson, *Breaking Ground*, 44.

16 "Zapiski khiagini Dashkovoy," 39.

17 Maksym Yaremenko, *"Akademiky" i Akademiia. Sotsialna istoriia osvity i osvichenosti v Ukraini XVIII st.* [*Academy and academicians. Social history of education and learning in Ukraine of the 18th century*]. (Kharkiv: Akta, 2014), 208–21.

Austria in 1786–87. During his summer journey to Carlsbad (now Karlovy Vary) in 1786, he briefly passed Kyiv. Scholars of Russian literary studies present Fonvizin as one of the early travel writers with a nationalistic predisposition. He ardently criticized Western, particularly French culture, was biased against it, and was also critical of the Westernization of Russian nobility[18]. Fonvizin's health deteriorated during his travel to the spa in 1786, as he had suffered several strokes in previous years. This influenced his mood and the style of his travel writing,[19] which became less polemical and fervent and much plainer.

In contrast to the memoirs of Dobrynin and Dashkova, Fonvizin's account is a travelogue that provides more specific details. We know his route, where he stayed, and even the differences he experienced upon entering Ukraine. Fonvizin, who was accompanied by his wife, was not as self-sufficient in his travel as Fliorinski nor as well-positioned as Dashkova, and had to constantly search for apartments to stay overnight. In Ukrainian cities the choice of perspective hosts was multi-ethnic; they stayed in a Jewish woman's house in Baturyn and a Greek's house in Nizhyn. On the night before entering Kyiv, they had to sleep in their carriage in Brovary. Fonvizin explained that Brovary had previously belonged to the Cave Monastery, which was good at providing hosting services to pilgrims. However, the monastery had recently lost control of the town, which left everyone unhappy with the situation.

Approaching Kyiv, Fonvizin, like Dobrynin and Dashkova, had no special expectations. He wrote: "The whole morning we were driving through sands, and barely made it to Kyiv by lunch," and his journey was tiresome and uneventful. The first few days were devoted to visiting various monasteries and churches, including the Cave Monastery. Fonvizin found its cathedral "beautiful" but then, as an experienced traveler who had visited Italy, he compared it to St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome and said that Kyiv's cathedral was "far behind" it. On the same day, he continued with sightseeing and visited St. Sophia's Cathedral, where Fonvizin simply noted that he "found several mosaics."[20]

Fonvizin's wife spent much of her time in Kyiv at the Cave Monastery, venerating the saints in the caves or attending church services, while Fonvizin occasionally joined her. He visited the caves only once, and briefly wrote about them, saying: "I am not describing the caves because there is a printed description of it, but I can say that they fill the soul with awe." The couple also visited the St. Michael's Monastery in Old Kyiv where they saw the relics of St. Barbara, and from there they went to Podil and visited the Ascension (Florivsky) convent. The day before leaving Kyiv, they visited the St. John the Apostle nunnery. It is evident that they were primarily interested in the religious aspect of Kyiv.

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18 More about it in Dickinson, *Breaking Ground*, 46; and Offord, *Journeys to a Graveyard*, 71–2.

19 Dickinson, *Breaking Ground*, 58.

20 D. I. Fonvizin, "Otryvki iz dnevnika chetvertogo zagranichnogo puteshestviia," in *Sobranie sochineniy: v 2 t.*, vol. 2 (Moscow, Leningrad: GIHL, 1959), 567.

Like other travelers of this cohort, Fonvizin had not much to say about the history of Kyiv or its 'primordial' connection to Russia. However, unlike the others, he did not visit the Kyiv Academy or the Brotherhood Monastery. It is unlikely that Fonvizin was driven by an interest in sightseeing; his wife's obsessive visits to the Cave Monastery and his own presence in numerous cathedrals and monasteries were probably connected to his poor health, the main reason for their trip to Carlsbad. They may have hoped that the Kyiv saints and holy places would help him.

Despite the differences in the backgrounds of the three travelers, their visits to Kyiv and their accounts of it shared some common features. They all stayed in Kyiv for only a short time, typically a week or two, and regardless of the length of their stay, they provided only brief reports of their experiences. None of them showed any particular interest in the history of Kyiv or its supposed connection to Russian statehood. While they did visit several monasteries, especially the Caves Monastery, and churches, none of them expressed any special interest or appreciation for Kyivan holy places. It did not yet have any additional value for Russians as "a cradle of Orthodox Christianity." This idea was simply not yet there to internalize and test. However, this attitude was soon to change, and the catalyst for this change was the royal visit of Catherine II.

In 1787, the Russian empress embarked on a tour to newly acquired Crimea, which included a visit to Kyiv, where she stayed from January to April[21]. Prior to her travel, a special guidebook was published, detailing information about every city on her route.[22] The section on Kyiv covered less than ten pages and mainly contained historical information about the city, focusing on a series of tragic events from its foundation. The guidebook stated that Kyiv had suffered constant destruction and devastation due to nomadic attacks, local feuds, fires, and plagues. From the twelfth to the fourteenth century, Kyiv was repeatedly "captured," "taken," "devastated," and "burnt down" by various rulers, before "finally being yielded to Russia" in 1686.[23] Catherine II and her entourage were familiar with this guidebook and its contents before their arrival in Kyiv.

The empress began her voyage in winter and arrived in Kyiv in late January. Throughout her journey, she wrote numerous letters to various people, sharing bits and pieces of her impressions of the city. She corresponded with her son and daughter-in-law, as well as with Nikolai Saltykov, a tutor of her grandsons. Catherine II shared her first impressions of Kyiv with her son, Pavel, on 6 February,

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21 This event was described by V. S. Ikonnikov, *Kiev v 1654–1855 gg.: istoricheskiy ocherk* [*Kyiv in 1654–1855: A historical essay*] (Kyiv: Tipografia imp. Univ. sv. Vladimira, 1904) and I. Bulkina "'Monakh byl putevoditelem…,' 240–62.

22 *Puteshestvie Ieia Imperatorskogo Velichestva (Iekateriny II) v poludennyi krai Rossii, predpriemlemoie v 1787 godu* [*The journey of her highness empress (Catherine II) to the southern lands of Russia, made in 1787*] (St. Petersgurg: Pechatano pri Gornom uchilishche, 1786).

23 Ibid., 36.

> Since my arrival, the cold has stopped and there is a thaw with a fog. I can't stop admiring the sweetness of air I breathe; I sleep eight to ten hours a day, eat with a rare appetite, and I'm not sure if it is because of the travel or climate… Since I am here, I have been searching: where is the city? But I have yet to find anything apart from two fortresses and suburbs. All these scattered parts are called Kyiv, and it makes me think about the past grandeur of this ancient capital.[24]

The same day, she expressed similar sentiments to Nikolai Saltykov: "I have been in Kyiv for nine days now, and I see only two fortresses and some suburbs. I am searching for the city but cannot seem to find it. These scattered houses are called Kyiv, which makes me believe that this city was once incredibly vast and populated."[25] Two days later, on February 8th, Catherine II reiterated this impression in a letter to the German journalist Friedrich Melchior von Grimm, noting, "It's a strange city, consisting of fortresses and suburbs, and I am still unable to locate the actual city. However, it seems that in the past, it was at least as large as Moscow."[26]

From these short but consistent observations, it is obvious that the empress had some expectations about Kyiv that were not fulfilled. Her guidebook presented Kyiv as an old capital worth all those numerous invasions and fighting for. She shared her observations with the numerous people around; from Ségur's memoirs, we know that she discussed Kyiv with respect to its past grandeur with foreign diplomats.[27]

It is notable that Catherine II was more interested in the military aspect of Kyiv, particularly the fortresses than in its many monasteries and holy places. Although she probably visited the Cave Monastery and other churches several times, it was only in mid-February, when she mentioned a visit to the caves in her letter to Saltykov, and she did not express any sense of piety in her words, "We all went to the near and far caves and came out as if from the bathhouse; we were sweating, though it was frosty outside, about minus ten to minus twelve."[28] However, according to other accounts, the empress visited more places in Kyiv than she mentioned in her letters. In April, she visited the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, although she did not seem to be impressed enough to mention it to any of her correspondents. She was also welcomed by the Kyiv magistrate in Podil.[29] One can surmise her lack of enthusiasm from the fact that among the outcomes of her visit to Kyiv was the development of a new city plan that aimed to transfer all the city's

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24 "Catherine II to the great prince," *Russkaia starina* 8 (1873), 671–2.

25 "Catherine II to N. I. Saltykov," *Russkiy arkhiv* 9 (1864), 951.

26 "Catherine II to baron von Grimm," *Russkiy arkhiv* 10 (1878), 131.

27 Louis-Philippe de Ségur, "Memoires ou Souvenirs," in *Le Voyage en Russie. Anthologie des voyageurs français aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*, ed. by Claude de Gréve (Paris: Éditions Rober Laffont, S. A., 1990), 677–8.

28 "Catherine II to N. I. Saltykov," 953.

29 About these visits, see Ikonnikov, *Kiev v 1654–1855 gg.*, 51–3.

infrastructure to its upper parts and eliminate Podil as part of the city, making it a suburb.[30]

Catherine's visit to Kyiv had the effect of stimulating travelers' interest in this city, both among Russians and foreigners. Western visitors flocked to Kyiv to meet the Russian empress, but in the process, they took a closer look at the city itself. That visit and the guidebook written for it, which presented Kyiv as a city of a tragic but great past, influenced the attitudes and expectations of Russian travelers. Other factors that contributed to the growing interest in Kyiv, in its past, and in travelogue as a genre, included the publication of an exemplary travelogue by Nikolai Karamzin, and the ascend of history as a discipline that has not yet been fully established, not only in the Russian Empire but also in other parts of the world.

...to obsession

By the end of the eighteenth century, Ukrainian lands had become more deeply integrated into imperial structures. One of the outcomes of the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, particularly in 1793 and 1795, was the annexation of (Ukrainian) palatinates including Podolia, Volhynia, Bratslav, and Kyiv, leading to their integration into the Russian Empire. For Kyiv, this meant that it was no longer a city on the Polish border. In the second half of the century, the Hetmanate was gradually stripped of the remnants of its autonomy and self-governance, such as the abolition of the Hetman office in 1764 and the forceful liquidation of the Zaporozhian Sich in 1775. Traditional administrative divisions were abolished and substituted with the Russian system in 1781, and serfdom was introduced in 1783.[31] In the longer term, all these changes made Ukrainian lands more familiar to Russian visitors. Ideologically, the concept of *translatio imperii* from a medieval political center, Kyiv, first to Moscow and later to St. Petersburg, was in demand.

Nikolai Karamzin had an immense impact on Russian authors with his *Letters of a Russian Traveler* (1791–2) in shaping a specific Russian national identity that opposed the Western identity. According to Andreas Schönle, Karamzin "prepared the ground for the rise of messianic ideas, which, in a reversal of enlightenment teleology, attributed a soteriological mission to Russia, the supposed laggard of history."[32] However, the further development of national identity, vis-à-vis the Western identity, demanded the establishment of a historical pedigree, preferably reaching as far into the past as possible. Ukraine, particularly Kyiv, with its heritage of medieval political

30 Ibid., 56–7.

31 See more about the liquidation of Ukrainian autonomy in Zenon E. Kohut, *Russian Centralism and Ukrainian Autonomy: Imperial Absorption of the Hetmanate, 1760's-1830's* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1988).

32 Andreas Schönle, "The Instability of Time and Plurality of Selves at Court and in Society," in *The Europeanized Elite in Russia, 1762–1825: Public Role and Subjective Self,* ed. by Alexander, Iosad, Evstratov Alexei, et al. (Ithaca, NY, 2020), 291.

culture and early introduction of Christianity (compared to the region), was very promising in this respect and could perfectly serve this purpose.

No surprise that the next generation of travel writers who visited Kyiv in the 1790s–1820s had a strong interest in history, with some being truly obsessed with the history of Kyiv. The authors of travelogues were well-educated but came from different social backgrounds and age groups. Vladimir Izmailov, a big admirer of Rousseau and Karamzin, had literary ambitions and wrote poems and prose, contributing to several journals and almanacks. Their influence is particularly evident in his *Journey to Southern Russia*, an account of his travel in 1799.[33] Metropolitan of Moscow, Platon (Petr Levshin), a cultured man who wrote extensively and traveled to many places within the empire, made travel notes during his voyages. He visited Kyiv in 1804 to inspect the situation with churches and monasteries, and the travelogue of this voyage was published posthumously in 1856.[34] Prince Ivan Dolgorukov was undoubtedly the most loquacious of all the travel writers who chronicled Kyiv, with not one but multiple travelogues to his name. He had literary inclinations, published some of his poetic and prose writings, and was a member of several literary societies. Dolgorukov made two visits to Kyiv, in 1810 and again in 1817, and documented his journeys in his travelogues. However, it was only after his passing that both of his works were published, in 1869–1870, as source material in one of Moscow University's historical journals, rather than as literary pieces.[35] Aleksei Levshin was only eighteen years old and still, a student at the University of Kharkiv when he made his journey to Kyiv in 1816. He later served as a public servant in various departments, including foreign and internal affairs. His travelogue, "Letters from Little Russia," was published soon after his journey. While brief and enthusiastic, it did not lack literary aspirations.[36] Andrei Glagolev had a university degree in literary studies and published essays and academic research on literature, philology, and architecture. This academic background is evident in his

33 *Puteshestviie v poludennuiu Rossiiu Vladimira Izmailova* [*The travel to Southern Russia by Vladimir Izamilov*] (Moscow: v tipografii Kh. Klaudiia, 1805).

34 Mitropolit Platon, "Puteshestvie Vysokopreosviashchenneishego Platona, Mitropolita Moskovskogo, v Kiev i po drugim Rossiiskim gorodam v 1804 godu" ["Travel of His Eminence Platon, Metropolitan of Moscow"], in I. M. Snegirev, *Zhizn' moskovskogo mitropolita Platona* [*Life of Metropolitan of Moscow, Platon*], part 1–2 (Moscow, 1856), accessed on 16.01.23, https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Ivan_Snegirev/zhizn-moskovskogo-mitropolita-platona/2_1.

35 Ivan Dolgorukov, "Slavny bubny za gorami ili puteshestvie moie koiekuda 1810 g.," ["Glorious tambourines over the mountains or my journey somewhere in 1810"], in *Chtenia v Imperatorskom obshchestve istorii i drevnostei Rossiiskikh pri Moskovskom universitete* [*Readings in the Imperial Society of Russian History and Antiquities in Moscow University*], book 2 (Moscow: v Universitetskoi tipografii, 1869); *Puteshestviie v Kiev v 1817 godu, soch. kn. Ivana Mikhailovicha Dolgorukogo* [*The travel to Kyiv in 1817, a work by prince Ivan Mikhailovich Dolgorukov*] (Moscow: v universitetskoi tipografii, 1870).

36 Aleksei Lievshin, *Pisma iz Malorossii* [*Letters from Little Russia*] (Kharkiv: v universitetskoi tipografii, 1816).

travel notes about Kyiv, which were published as part of a series of notes from various journeys made between 1823 and 1827.[37]

For most of these travelers, the historical appeal of Kyiv was the main attraction. They came to the city in search of the past. Some travelers from this cohort conducted prior research by reading chronicles and histories, including Nestor's chronicle, Vasilii Tatishchev's history, and Inokentii Gizel's *Synopsis*. However, as Tolochko rightly pointed out, their knowledge of Kyiv was first and foremost theoretical and bookish.[38] To make it more practical, they embarked on a voyage to Kyiv to experience its past first-hand.

Despite Kyiv not being the only destination on their itinerary, many travelers regarded it as a very special place, replete with monuments and relics from the past. For some, simply setting foot in Ukraine was tantamount to entering a storied realm. Vladimir Izmailov expressed this sentiment, saying, "I stepped onto the land which used to be the theatre of great events and a prey to neighboring countries."[39] Similarly, Alexei Levshin wrote, "Old Russian history has long inspired my desire to see Little Russia, famous for many great events. It's inexcusable for a Russian, I thought, not to be in Kyiv, not to see Poltava, and I hurried to observe monuments of our ancestors' glory."[40]

When traveling to Kyiv, all the travelers from this cohort had high expectations of what they might encounter, hoping to experience the city's past firsthand. Vladimir Izmailov's vivid anticipation of entering Kyiv is a prime example, as he invoked all his imagination and literary talent to conjure up dramatic visions of past events. While passing through the dark forest on the way from Brovary to Kyiv, Izmailov fantasized about the city's tumultuous past:

> I felt as though I saw the time when the Kyiv principality groaned under the yoke of alien peoples when the chains imposed by the victor's hand rattled when murderous barbarity caused events, one more horrible than the other. A gray-haired man, dead to the joys of life but still alive for the love of the fatherland, raised a languid eye to heave, praying for the salvation of the tsar and the Russian people: he was on his knees–his last breath of life ready to redeem the fatherland; the sky rejected the prayer of this unfortunate man… In the darkness of the dense forest, under the melancholy pines, a pale beauty with a wild look and disheveled hair searched for traces of a tender young man killed in the war, and finally was

37 *Zapiski russkogo puteshestvennika A. Glagoleva s 1823 po 1827 god* [*The note of the Russian traveler A. Glagolev from 1823 to 1827*], part 1 (Saint-Petersburg: v tipografii Imperatorskoi Rossiiskoi Akademii, 1837).

38 Tolochko, "Kyievo-ruska spadshchyna," 322.

39 *Puteshestviie v poludennuiu Rossiiu*, 3.

40 Lievshin, *Pisma iz Malorossii*, introduction.

> waiting for a bright moon over his grave… It seems that the hand of time has preserved this gloomy pine forest so that it could bring back to our memory the history of our homeland.[41]

This imaginative account by Izmailov on the way to Kyiv is not based on any episode of history. His historical imagination is so abstract and blurred that it conflates things like the "Kyiv principality" and "the salvation of the tsar and the Russian people" which do not belong together. And this is just one example of Izmailov's use of (pseudo) historical fantasies, which he employed repeatedly throughout his travelogue.

Andreas Schönle reflects on Izmailov's method of combining fragments of evidence from Nestor's chronicle with his own imagination and myth-making, explaining it as a result of his choice of genre–the literary travelogue –which best served his purpose. As Schönle puts it, for Izmailov, as for a sentimental writer, these entirely imaginary events became real by virtue of being "distilled through the heart."[42] In this respect, Izmailov is quite unique, as other Russian travelers to Kyiv attempted to adhere to source evidence even in their historical imaginings. For example, when depicting the former glory of the Kyiv Cave Monastery, Aleksei Levshin does not allow himself to be carried away by his imagination and consistently refers to the primary sources, even while embellishing his account with details that could not be proven by sources:

> in former times there was a terrifying green forest and wild animals roared! In this dwelling of horror, in the shadow of trees as old as the world, Hilarion dug a cave… in 1089, a magnificent cathedral emerged on the site of the former desert where gold shone, precious stones sparkled, art flourished; a huge cross of pure gold was erected on top of it (according to *Synopsis*). Furious Batu came to Kyiv–and the Cave Monastery disappeared; everything was wrecked, plundered, devastated; leaving only ruins behind.[43]

While some travelers like Izmailov used their imagination to create entirely imaginary historical events, for others, fantasy was just a way to fill in the gaps left by past destructions and reconstructions. Prince Dolgorukov suggested: "Yet, the thought complements everything: it paints every inch of the land, and everywhere it speaks of antiquity, of old Russians, of the infancy of our religion, of the bravery of morals."[44]

In Kyiv, all the Russian travelers without exception were united in their quest for traces of its past. And not just any past, but a very precise medieval past of princely rule and the establishment of Christianity. No wonder that even Metropolitan Platon, who

41 *Puteshestviie v poludennuiu Rossiiu Vladimira Izmailova*, 10–1.

42 Schönle, *Authenticity and Fiction*, 116.

43 Lievshin, *Pis'ma iz Malorossii*, 101–2.

44 Dolgorukov, "Slavny bubny," 284.

came to Kyiv primarily for pilgrimage, was happy to see "the old traces that were resurrected in the homeland of our holy faith and its first state."[45] These two main subjects of interest–the origins of statehood and Christian (Orthodox) religion–defined the sites they sought to visit in Kyiv.

According to Andrei Glagolev, who traveled to Kyiv in the 1820s and benefited from the experience and recommendations of his predecessors, all parts of Kyiv were steeped in traces of the past: "In Kyiv, in almost all its parts: New, Old, and Podil, on the Shchekavytsia hill and in the suburbs, everywhere you can see traces of old dwellings, edifices, and cemeteries."[46] However, even though these traces were "everywhere," they were not evenly distributed. One part of Kyiv stood out as particularly rich in historical monuments–the clue was in its very name. This was of course Old Kyiv. That same Glagolev concurred: "Old Kyiv… In it, every site is marked by a holy place or history."[47]

Visitors to Kyiv in the 1790s–1820s typically followed a similar route, beginning with the Pechersk district, then moving on to Old Kyiv, and finally to Podil. Andreas Schönle compared the efforts of the first travelers to Kyiv interested in history with those of detectives striving to reconstruct "the plot that led to a particular state of affairs, of which they gained firsthand knowledge by traveling to the scene. In their journeys, they pursued leads that would enable them to tie together the loose ends of a story perceived to be inscribed in outside reality."[48]

Historical adventure and concentrated impressions were mainly inspired by Old Kyiv, and the most striking part was associated with the visit to St. Sophia Cathedral. Vladimir Izamilov, as the first traveler from this cohort, demonstrated reverent interest in this site mainly due to its history. In his exalted manner, he begins the description of the cathedral with one of his historical fantasies about its origin: "Where once human blood flowed in streams, where swords flashed and arrows flew, where the Pechenegs tested the courage of Kyivans, Varangians, Novgorodians and where victory finally crowned the true sons of Russia–there Prince Yaroslav I erected a temple in the name of St. Sophia."[49] He then mentions two objects worth a visitor's attention: Prince Yaroslav's white marble tomb and medieval mosaics. Metropolitan Platon also viewed "this ancient cathedral" and paid attention to the medieval mosaics. However, he was disappointed that only fragments of it survived, and with the enthusiasm of a person who had no clue about preservation or restoration, added that "it seems that now it is possible to find artists who can produce the same mosaics and fill in the gaps."

Prince Dolgorukov had a particular fondness for St. Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv, calling it his favorite among the city's ancient monuments: "Among various ancient monuments of Kyiv, I haven't seen anything like St. Sophia Cathedral."[50] When he

45 Mitropolit Platon, "Puteshestvie Vysokopreosviashchenneishego Platona."

46 *Zapiski russkogo puteshestvennika A. Glagoleva*, 99.

47 Ibid., 89.

48 Schönle, *Authenticity and Fiction in the Russian Literary Journey*, 111.

49 *Puteshestviie v poludennuiu Rossiiu*, 34.

50 Dolgorukov, "Slavny bubny," 275.

returned to Kyiv after seven years, he made a point of visiting the cathedral again. He was particularly enchanted by the mosaics, and unlike Metropolitan Platon, Dolgorukov was not disappointed but rather satisfied that at least fragments of the mosaics had made it through the centuries: "it is amazing that such delicate artwork survived till our time. It is well known that enemy regiments once had their horses in this cathedral." And as in the anecdote about the glass that is (depending on perspective) either half-empty or half-full, whereas his predecessors had seen the mosaics as mostly ruined or destroyed, Dolgorukov took an opposite perspective, saying that "neither Batu nor fires managed to destroy it."[51]

While other travelers were enthusiastic about St. Sophia Cathedral, Aleksey Levshin was not. He suggested that it was once similar to Constantinople's famous cathedral of the same name, but over time its appearance changed, and it lost its value. When it came to the mosaics, he only noted their existence and was quite critical of Yaroslav's tomb, stating that "Once it may have been an excellent work of art, but now its old age is the only reason we pay attention to it,"[52] denying it any artistic value.

Although all the travelers in this cohort agreed that St. Sophia Cathedral was an incomparable historical monument with valuable attractions that were positively worth visiting, they were not so unanimous with respect to other historical sites.

The Church of the Tithes, as the first stone church constructed by the order of Prince Volodymyr in the late tenth century and destroyed in 1240 during the siege of Kyiv by Batu Khan, attracted some interest. Izmailov just mentioned his regret concerning its destruction and embellished this with the story of how princes used to give feasts to all the Kyivans near the church.[53] Metropolitan Platon, however, expressed disappointment with the church: "It is small, low, made of stone with wooden annex, it has neither inner nor outer magnificence and even the building itself is not the most ancient."[54] What is more significant, he was not sure if it was *the* Tithes Church or if it stood in its very place, revealing his surface-level knowledge of the subject. Dolgorukov was similarly uncertain about the church's authenticity, but added that "Tartars, Poles, and fires influenced the state of the Church of Tithes and once the most splendid [church], it degraded into a sorry state."[55] Part of the church's appeal was its fame as the burial place of Prince Volodymyr and Princess Olha (Volodymyr's grandmother and the first Christian ruler of Kyiv). And once again the trope of absence dominated in travelers' writings, as they searched for the tombs of these historical figures but found nothing: "Where is the tomb of this great man [Volodymyr] who enlightened his people with rays of heavenly faith? Where is the tomb of the wise woman who was a forerunner of [Russian empresses] Elizabeth and Catherine? I search for them and do not find them. The time has hidden traces of the places where their precious remains

51 *Puteshestviie v Kiev*, 114.
52 Lievshin, *Pisma iz Malorossii*, 99.
53 *Puteshestviie v poludennuiu Rossiiu*, 39.
54 Mitropolit Platon, "Puteshestvie Vysokopreosviashchenneishego Platona."
55 Dolgorukov, "Slavny bubny," 282.

once rested;"[56] and "Olha, Volodymyr, and his wife Anna were buried here. There are neither tombstones nor inscriptions; everything vanished, time destroyed it all."[57] Only all-knowing Glagolev had an explanation for what happened, describing how the Metropolitan Petro Mohyla initiated excavations in 1636 and discovered two marble tombs–one of Volodymyr and another one of his wife.[58]

Another historically dubious location was the alleged burial site of Askold, the Norse ruler of Kyiv mentioned in Nestor's Chronicle, known as Askold's Grave. Metropolitan Platon visited the site because he believed it was the location of the first Christian church erected by Princess Olha's order. By the time of Dolgorukov's visit, a new church had been built on the site. However, the prince was more interested in the medieval story associated with the location, although he expressed doubts about its accuracy: "Who knows the truth? It is true that Askold left his bones in Kyiv, but it is doubtful that they are here, on the St. Nicholas Monastery site: maybe they are half a verst up or down."[59]

Russian travelers visiting Kyiv's historical sites, whether authentic or alleged, were often left disappointed. They arrived with high expectations of seeing the authentic remnants of medieval princely times, as depicted in their favorite historical works such as Nestor and Tatishchev–anything, even ruins would have satisfied them. However, at the beginning of the modern era, Kyiv had almost nothing to meet their taste, little of what they saw reminded them of Kyivan Rus times. To fill the gap, some of them, such as Izmailov and, to a lesser extent, Dolgorukov, used their imagination to populate empty or altered sites with their historical fantasies. However, this did not always help to avoid frustration, particularly for Dolgorukov who had many grievances against the state of Kyiv's antiquities. The city itself was old, but its historicity was not readily apparent: "It's not as obvious, as tactile as Novgorod's. There you feel centuries on every church building, every tower spire, they are clearly represented and are evidence to the longevity of the city; here everything is new–more fashion, less antiquity."[60]

Even Metropolitan Platon was disappointed with the lack of expected antiques in Kyiv. Regarding the old St. Nicholas Church on the site of Askold's Grave, he famously noted that while the church was "already prone to dilapidation, the edifice itself is not ancient."[61] In his opinion, Kyiv's monuments did not correspond to its past grandeur. Alexei Levshin agreed and concluded: Kyiv's "beauty does not in the least correspond to its former grandeur, today's Kyiv cannot be compared with the ancient one,"[62] even though this "ancient" Kyiv existed only in Levshin's and his fellow Russians' minds.

56 *Puteshestviie v poludennuiu Rossiiu*, 40–1.
57 Lievshin, *Pisma is Malorossii*, 127–8.
58 *Zapiski russkogo puteshestvennika A. Glagoleva*, 96.
59 Dolgorukov, "Slavny bubny," 271.
60 Ibid., 262.
61 Mitropolit Platon, "Puteshestvie Vysokopreosviashchenneishego Platona."
62 Lievshin, *Pisma iz Malorossii*, 94–5.

In addition to his dissatisfaction with the state of Kyiv's medieval heritage, Dolgorukov had a long list of specific complaints regarding the preservation of historical heritage. He held Nestor in high esteem and was displeased with the condition of his relics at the Kyiv Caves Monastery: "Why not take his coffin to the cathedral and put him before the eyes of everyone? Isn't Nestor worth such an honor? Or have we not realized that he is worth it."[63] To be fair, seven years later Dolgorukov visited Kyiv again and noted that Nestor's coffin had been covered with gilded cloth, which was an improvement.[64] He also lamented the state of St. Volodymyr's relics: "Was Volodymyr… less deserving of Christian gratitude than Sergii in the Trinity Lavra and Dmitrii in Rostov? …And how can it be that only his head was found? There is only a head in a simple, undecorated *raka* [reliquary box]–this is at once shameful and pitiful!"[65] Later, while visiting the Church of the Tithes, he returned to this topic: "It is not surprising that Volodymyr's church is in such a dismal state when he himself was torn to pieces without mercy. His head is in the Caves Monastery, and part of his relics is in the Cathedral, but where is the rest of him?" And he added a pessimistic conclusion: "We would rather get a piece of lava from under the Roman ruins than care about the glory of our own antiquity."[66]

Dolgorukov's conclusion reveals his injured patriotic feelings. He believed that his–relatively–new compatriots from Kyiv were not able to appreciate, still less preserve their historical monuments, which were so dear–since recently–to the Russians. Russian travelers came to Kyiv–the old capital of the glorious medieval state whose legacy Russia was claiming–with the hope of discovering traces of the past like those in Rome, and more recently in Pompei and Herculaneum, but obviously failed. Moreover, traces of other parts of Kyiv's past were of no–or little–interest to them. Many destroyed medieval churches were restored in the seventeenth century thanks to the efforts of Metropolitan Petro Mohyla and in the early eighteenth century thanks to the patronage by the Hetman Ivan Mazepa. As a result, they were executed in the style of the so-called "Cossack Baroque." However, as we have seen, Russian travelers were not ready to appreciate this style that replaced authentic medieval architecture. Dolgorukov was aware of this "renovation problem" and remarked: "It is likely that after the destruction of Kyiv, these famous historical cathedrals were renovated or even rebuilt multiple times. At best, it would be fortunate if the sites where historical events took place were preserved at all."[67] Dolgorukov was the only traveler from this cohort who openly acknowledged the legacy of Ivan Mazepa, a Ukrainian Hetman who was deemed a traitor and villain by official Russian discourse, so it was surprising that the prince at least noted Mazepa's building and renovation initiatives in the Caves Monastery and St. Nicholas Monastery in the Desert.

63 Dolgorukov, "Slavny bubny," 270–1.
64 *Puteshestviie v Kiev*, 108.
65 Dolgorukov, "Slavny bubny," 266.
66 Ibid., 283.
67 Dolgorukov, "Slavny bubny," 283.

There were only two instances where Russian travelers were gracious towards Kyiv objects related to later history. The first one was the portrait gallery of historical (mostly Ukrainian) figures in the Dormition Cathedral of the Cave Monastery. Izmailov, in particular, was quite exalted about it. For him, taking pride in Ukrainian heroic figures such as Prince Kostiantyn of Ostrih (1460–1530), who was a famous protector of the Orthodox faith, or Hetman Bohdan Khmelnitsky (1595–1657), who led a Cossack uprising in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and made the controversial Pereiaslav Treaty with the Russian tzar, was a sign of being a patriotic Russian citizen.[68]

The Kyiv Academy was the second site connected to recent history (and still fulfilling its function) that attracted most Russian travelers. As we have already seen, it was one of the few places that had also interested even travelers from the earlier generation. This interest had a pragmatic explanation: they claimed the legacy of this seventeenth-century educational institution as their own, to make Russian educational and learned tradition seem older. As we saw, Dashkova was proud of the Academy as part of Russian scholarly heritage. Metropolitan Platon noted that he was happy "to see the Academy that became famous with so many learned people and… from whence, for the most part, teachers were taken to the Moscow Academy and we were lucky to get some enlightenment from them."[69] Levshin was even more eloquent in expressing how Russia was indebted to the Kyiv Academy, "where science flourished even when the darkness of ignorance covered almost all Russia; where many servants of the altar were formed, famous for their eloquence, learning, and virtues; where many of those who later got the most important state positions were brought up."[70] Finally, Glagolev, writing at least a decade later, repeated the same praises to the Academy's contribution towards training high clergy and statesmen of Russia, and then he concluded: "before the foundation of universities, Kyiv was, in the exact sense, Russian Athens."[71] In fact, this connection between the Kyiv Academy and the education of Russian clergy and officials was the only aspect of the institution's history that interested the majority of Russian travelers.

As previously mentioned, one of the main motifs running through most of the travel accounts of Kyiv was the contrast between its past glory and its present state, which was viewed as miserable by many Russian travelers due to a host of later disasters. It was not a new theme and had recently been used by Catherine II and by the guidebook for her voyage to Kyiv. Most of the travel writers of this era (except for Glagolev) constantly referenced the invasions, destructions, fires, and other misfortunes that had plagued Kyiv throughout its history. "Wars, devastations, and fires depredated its glory," wrote Levshin.[72]

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68 *Puteshestviie v poludennuiu Rossiiu*, 22–3.

69 Mitropolit Platon, "Puteshestvie Vysokopreosviashchenneishego Platona."

70 Lievshin, *Pisma iz Malorossii*, 130.

71 *Zapiski russkogo puteshestvennika A. Glagoleva*, 99.

72 Lievshin, *Pisma iz Malorossii*, 95.

For these travelers, emphasizing the misfortunes that had befallen Kyiv in the centuries after the Rus period served two purposes. First, it helped explain their failure to find satisfying traces of the city's illustrious past. Second, it allowed them to downplay the significance of Kyiv in comparison not only to imperial centers like Moscow and St. Petersburg but also to other historic Russian towns. The tendency to compare Kyiv and its various sites and objects to those of the Russian capitals and old towns was one of the distinctive imperial travel practices to describe foreign phenomena in familiar terms, translate by comparison. That is why they constantly compared Kyiv to Moscow, St. Petersburg, Vladimir, and Novgorod. In most cases, the comparison, especially with the imperial centers, was not in Kyiv's favor, although it could be neutral, as when Glagolev wrote about the Dormition Cathedral that it was "like our Kremlin cathedral."[73] Kyiv could only outclass smaller towns, such as Vladimir. Before leaving Kyiv, Dolgorukov looked back and admitted: "To praise Vladimir, it is enough to say that it is like a small Kyiv."[74] This tendency did not change until the end of the Russian imperial rule over Ukraine–and would continue in the Soviet times when everything in Ukraine was evaluated through the prism of (unfavorable) comparison to Russian analogs.

In the course of the 1790s and 1820s, history became one of the crucial means of appropriation of Kyiv for Russian travelers–and for Russian authorities. While previous generations came to Kyiv mainly for its holy places, by the end of the eighteenth century, regardless of their social backgrounds, a new generation of travelers showed a profound interest in the history of Kyiv, which purportedly connected Kyivan Rus to the Russian past and allowed for claims about *translatio imperii*. These travelers were coming to Kyiv, searching for material evidence to support this connection but found very little of what they were looking for. In the words of Tolochko: "Russian travelers, of course, were discovering in the city their own, Russian, history. Modern Kyiv–part of Little Russia–meant nothing for them, and they tried hard to ignore it."[75] Unable to find desirable material evidence, some travelers used their imagination to present Kyiv as a whole as a site of Kyivan Rus history. But all of them were unwilling to recognize that not only disasters were the reason why actual Kyiv was so different from Kyiv of their fantasies and expectations. For centuries, Kyiv was part of a different political and cultural development, and it had a heritage that was completely distinct from Russia. And at the time of their visit, Kyiv was not yet a Russian city.[76]

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73 *Zapiski russkogo puteshestvennika A. Glagoleva*, 84.

74 Dolgorukov, "Slavny bubny," 304.

75 Tolochko, "Kyievo-rus'ka spadshchyna," 331.

76 Michael Hamm also supports the idea that Kyiv was russified in the course of the nineteenth century and came as a "Russian city" only by its end. See Michael F. Hamm, *Kiev. A Portrait, 1800–1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 17, 55, 83.

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