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Symbolic and Ritual Practices in the Post-Soviet Urban World: Symbolic Space and Festivity in the Cities of Eastern and Southern Ukraine, 1990s–2010s¹

Abstract

The article examines symbolic and ritual practices in five cities of southern and eastern Ukraine – Dnipro, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa, and Kharkiv – during the 1990s to 2010s. The author considers the ways in which urban symbolic and ritual practices (primarily expressed in such symbolic forms as municipal ceremonies and festivals) are connected with the cultural and symbolic space of cities. First and foremost, these practices represent a kind of “symbolic mediators” of urban cultural memory and participate in the preservation, broadcasting, and actualization of the cultural semantics of the city. During the 1990s to 2010s, urban symbolic and ritual practices in Ukraine were characterized by efforts to leave

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behind the most objectionable manifestations of the Soviet culture of festivity and create a fundamentally new festive canon. To an extent, these developments were part of the so-called “decolonization of historical memory,” initiated by the central government and urban communities. Undoubtedly, they were facilitated by the ongoing socio-political transformations, particularly those connected with the Orange Revolution (2004) and Euromaidan Revolution (2013–2014), the Russian aggression against Ukraine, etc. At the same time, the transformation of the Soviet complex of symbolic and ritual practices progressed only slowly; the change of political regime did not lead to a large-scale “ceremonial revolution.” Modern Ukrainian festive culture involves a combination, often quite eclectic, of at least several elements: a “new” style of festivity, generally based on borrowed “Western” cultural patterns; “traditional” forms, stressing national aspects and attempting to revive pre-Soviet cultural models; and “Soviet” forms, which preserve the Soviet festive canon, often adapted and rethought within the framework of the new urban tradition. Overall, the process of constructing a new model of urban festivity in Ukraine is far from complete; this emerging cultural complex remains fluid and capable of “turning” towards the festive traditions of different historical periods.

Keywords: symbolic practices, ritual practices, big cities, Ukraine.

Introduction: Urban Festivity

The constantly changing and interconnected conceptual spaces and landscapes of the city exhibit a number of salient traits. In particular, they contain symbolic elements through which urban residents confirm their commitment to certain cultural values. The carrier, and at the same time expression, of the latter is the symbolic space of the city, which represents a combination of tangible and intangible components. This space, heterogeneous by nature, includes both *objects* (such as monumental sites of memory) and *actions* (especially urban traditions).

During the Soviet era, symbolic and ritual practices were the subject of a large-scale historical experiment in the field of urban festivity, launched by the Soviet regime with the purpose of constructing a “Soviet identity” and as part of the project of cultivating a new Soviet personality (Iurchak, 2014; Rol’f, 2009). Conversely, the 1990s saw the beginning of an active “search for” and “invention” of a modern urban festive tradition and culture. Attempts to get rid of the most objectionable manifestations of the Soviet culture of festivity and create a fundamentally new festive canon became a prominent aspect of urban ritual practices in independent Ukraine. In

part, these developments unfolded within the framework of the so-called “decolonization of historical memory,” which, according to Pierre Nora, is characteristic of countries liberated from totalitarian or authoritarian regimes. The elites of such countries usually turn to traditional memory, destroyed or distorted by the previous regimes in their favor (Nora, 2005). At the same time, the modern festive culture of Ukraine’s big cities looks quite eclectic. Established Soviet symbolic and ritual practices have not been completely erased; a significant proportion of them were adapted and rethought within the new urban tradition. The functional purpose of urban cultural practices has also changed.

Using the large cities of southern and eastern Ukraine – Donetsk, Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa, and Kharkiv – as case studies, in this essay we consider the specifics of urban symbolic and ritual practices during the 1990s to 2010s. We address several important issues: (1) the place of these practices in the cultural and symbolic life of large cities in today’s Ukraine; (2) their impact on the crystallization of the collective perception of the city during the post-Soviet period; (3) their role in the transformation of urban culture in the late Soviet era and today.

In exploring these questions, we engage with a diverse source base. First and foremost, we consider the local legislation regulating urban symbols and festive traditions. We pay special attention to local newspapers and news websites. As part of this study, we have also examined a selection of guidebooks for the five cities in question, published from the late nineteenth to early twenty-first centuries. The guidebooks made it possible to identify the most important aspects of the symbolic space of the five cities, to select the significant cases, and on their basis to analyze symbolic and ritual practices. Furthermore, we have conducted 12 interviews with participants of urban celebrations. The interviews allowed us to describe the individual perceptions of the symbolic space of the cities, and to analyze their influence on urban culture and vice versa. The study also draws on a variety of visual materials: photographs and videos of urban festivities, postcards, and the like. The materials used were collected by the author in cooperation with the research group under the project “CityFace: Practices of the Self-Representation of Multinational Cities in the Industrial and Post-Industrial Era.”

It should be noted that urban symbolic and ritual practices have already become the subject of a significant body of work by historians, anthropologists, culturologists, sociologists, and representatives of other disciplines (Bell, 2009). An entire interdisciplinary field of *ritual studies* took shape in the 1970s at the intersection of religious studies, liturgical studies, anthropology, and theater studies. This multidisciplinary platform

emerged out of the study of ritual as repetitive symbolic behavior, which must be deciphered to understand its symbolic and utilitarian meaning. This view spread during the second half of the nineteenth to the first half of the twentieth century. In the 1960s, a new phase began with the rise of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of ritual as a window to understanding the cultures of different historical eras and groups (Post, 2015). Today, more and more researchers are proposing to consider ritual as a kind of symbolic, as well as formative and performative, practice (Sherman, 2018). Generally, a wide range of research is now incorporated within *ritual studies*, including cultural memory studies, leisure studies, media and communication studies, migration studies, and others (Post, 2015).

We can identify several general features of the existing scholarship on the symbolic and ritual practices in the cities of southern and eastern Ukraine. First, the vast majority of published research is fragmentary in nature, focusing on individual municipal celebrations. It does not cohere into a more or less holistic view of the genesis of the festive culture of the cities under consideration. Second, a separate body of research is devoted to mass Soviet official celebrations (traditions of the Soviet “red calendar”) and their symbolic attributes. Third, the study of the ritual practices that emerged since the 1990s is mostly concerned with local specifics and the “invention” of “new” and “rethinking” of “old” festive traditions. There is virtually no thorough analysis of the transfer and adaptation of cultural patterns and symbolic forms.

It should be noted that most significant symbolic practices of the Post-Soviet urban space have received sufficient scholarly attention within the framework of memory studies. Researchers primarily focused on the genesis of the historical narratives and their influence on “memory wars.” At the same time, research interest in local specifics of the “invention” of “new” and “rethinking” of “old” symbolic practices began to grow only in the 2000s. This new generation of studies (Fedor et al., 2017; Kas’ianov, 2018a, 2018b; Schenk, 2020) not only recorded various transformations of the symbolic space of cities, but also analyzed the problems of its collective perception. Unfortunately, the modern urban festive traditions of Ukrainian cities remain almost unexplored.

We propose to expand the research focus and consider the genesis of symbolic and ritual practices as a means of the intertextual representation of the city. It is important not only to register transformations of the ingredients of the urban symbolic space, but also to develop a procedure for its decoding, ultimately determining its impact on the construction of collective urban identity. It should be recognized that symbolic and ritual practices as components of the cultural and symbolic space of the

city play a key role in affirming its specificity, influence the identity of the city's inhabitants, and impart a certain meaning and value orientations to their lifeworld.²

The Symbolic Image of the Large Cities of Southern and Eastern Ukraine

Today, the definition by cities of their own “face,” or, in other words, their symbolic image, remains a topical issue. Several complementary, but also in some cases mutually exclusive, images coexist in the five subject cities. Often these images combine the heritage of various eras (primarily imperial, Soviet, and modern), as well as reflect different visions of their cities' future. At the same time, different images of cities compete with each other. It is worth recalling the work of Kevin Lynch, according to whom the image of the city is formed through the overlaying of many individual images (Lynch, 1960, p. 50). The symbolic image of the city depends on the complex and contradictory processes of the preservation, broadcasting, and actualization of the cultural semantics of the city (A. Assman, 2014; IA. Assman, 2004).

Without going into a detailed analysis of the genesis of the cultural memory and images of the five subject cities, we should note that they display many common features. First, the cities selected for this study are large industrial and commercial centers. Furthermore, the main directions of their development were “programmed” as early as the second half of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For instance, the city of Katerynoslav (since 1926 – Dnipropetrovsk, since 2016 – Dnipro) was one of the main centers of the mining industry in the south of the Russian Empire. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the same factors contributed to the founding and industrial development of Iuzivka (since 1924 – Stalino, since 1961 – Donetsk). The city of Oleksandrivsk (since 1921 – Zaporizhzhia) was a center of agricultural machine-building and foundry industry. The active growth and economic development of Odesa began in the late eighteenth century; it became one of the largest commercial centers of the Russian Empire. During the second half of the eighteenth and in the nineteenth

² Methodologically, this study is based on the semiotic approach, Roland Barthes' concept of mythical communication, and Jean Baudrillard's concept of symbolic exchange. We also engage with methods and approaches developed in cultural anthropology (E. Leach, V. Turner, V. Toporov), urban anthropology (I. Pardo, R. Park, K. Lynch), and cultural and visual history (S. Sontag, R. Chalfen). We draw most heavily on the idea of practices, as introduced to the social sciences by such figures as P. Bourdieu, S. Turner, and T. R. Schatzki.

centuries, Kharkiv emerged as another significant commercial, industrial, and financial center of the Russian Empire. Gradually, the population of these cities grew and their ethnic structure became more diverse.

During the Soviet era, these cities either retained their role as important industrial centers of the USSR (for example, Donetsk, Dnipro, Odesa, and Kharkiv) or became such centers (for example, Zaporizhzhia). Large-scale infrastructure projects were realized there.³ Soviet propaganda portrayed them mainly as industrial powerhouses, cities of “labor glory” and “heroic revolutionary and labor traditions,” as well as “prominent scientific and cultural centers” and “cradles of Soviet power in Ukraine” (this most fully applies to Kharkiv, which during 1919–1934 was the capital of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic). It should be noted that such characterization was typical for the description of most large Soviet cities and fully consistent with the Soviet totalitarian discourse, which relied heavily on slogans and propaganda triumphalism (Serio, 1999, p. 381). During the 1990s to 2010s, the cities under study lost a significant share of their industrial potential, but the “industrial” myth persists and continues to influence their social and political life to this day.

Second, these five cities are heterogeneous in nature; they have fully felt the effects of the manifold socio-political and socio-cultural transformations of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. They became the birthplace of a “new” Ukrainian culture. Some of the cities (first of all, Kharkiv and Odesa) also have a long university tradition, which implies both a high level of self-reflection and a wide range of cultural innovations. The establishment of universities had a significant impact on the development of these cities. Kharkiv University was founded in 1804; the University of New Russia in Odesa (Odesa University) – in 1865; Katerynoslav (Dnipro) University – in 1918; Zaporizhzhia University – in 1930 (until 1985 – Pedagogical Institute); and Donetsk University – in 1937 (until 1965 – Pedagogical Institute). Today, of these five cities Kharkiv is home to the largest number of public and private institutions of higher education – more than forty universities, institutes, and academies.

Third, the cities under study are true “crossroads of cultures.” According to the national census of 2001, they remain hubs of ethnic diversity and interaction. In part, their ethnic diversification was linked to the rapid industrial development during the twentieth century and the activities of institutions of higher education, which attracted foreign academics and students. These five cities boast a wide variety of national-cultural societies

³ For instance, the first stations of the Kharkiv subway system (second in Ukraine after Kyiv) were opened in 1975. The foundations for the Dnipropetrovsk subway were solemnly laid in 1981. Projects for subway construction were developed in Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Odesa.

and foreign missions. At the same time, a relatively low level of interethnic and interreligious conflict and tension remains their characteristic feature.

The City's Chief Symbol: Between the Traditional Coat of Arms and the Modern Logo

As we know, in Europe the municipal coat of arms appeared during the late thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries (Soboleva, 1985, p. 14). The birth and development of this category of heraldic devices was a prolonged process; it had its own specifics in every country and even in every city. Over time, the rules of composing and using municipal coats of arms changed, as did their role and purpose. At first, they performed a mostly representative function, recording the privileges granted to the townspeople by the higher secular or ecclesiastical authorities. A similar role was played by other municipal symbols, such as the city standard, flag, and seal, as well as the status insignia (staff, livery collar, etc.) of the functionaries of the local self-government (Drelicharz & Piech, 2004). Generally, these symbols formed a hierarchical body of interconnected elements. The most important among them was the city's coat of arms. Towards the early modern era, municipal coats of arms began to perform a mainly nominative function – that is, they designated the city as a self-governing corporate entity.

Modern researchers stress that in the Russian Empire municipal coats of arms were an ideological tool of the central government. They were used in the interests of state power rather than to reflect the principles of municipal self-government (Grechylo, 1998, p. 103). Of the cities under study, Kharkiv was the first to have its coat of arms approved (in 1781). Its main elements were a cornucopia (filled with fruit and crowned with flowers) and caduceus (the staff of Mercury), which marked Kharkiv as a commercial center. The city's previous emblem – a stretched bow with an arrow, used on seals in the seventeenth century – was not taken into account during the creation of the new one (Grechylo, 1998, p. 70). The first coat of arms of Odesa was approved in 1798. Its upper field depicted the imperial eagle, and lower – a silver ship's anchor (Vinkler, 1899, p. 109). The coats of arms of Oleksandrivsk and Katerynoslav were approved in 1811 (*Gerby gorodov, raionov, sel i poselkov Ukrainy: G. Zaporozhe*, n.d.; *Gerby gorodov, raionov, sel i poselkov Ukrainy: G. Dnepr*, n.d.).

Later, the existing municipal coats of arms were revised on the orders of the emperor. The updated designs of the coats of arms of Katerynoslav, Oleksandrivsk, and Odesa were rejected. However, the new coat of arms of the Kharkiv Province was approved by an imperial decree in 1878. It

consisted of a silver shield depicting a black horse's head with red eyes and tongue – a reference to the numerous horse stud farms in the province. The new design was not well received by the Kharkiv nobility, and eventually the old coat of arms was restored to the city, with some changes (Saratov, 2008, pp. 128–133). Finally, it should be noted that Iuzivka did not have a coat of arms of its own (*Gerby gorodov, raionov, sel i poselkov Ukrainy: G. Donetsk*, n.d.; IAsenov, 2008).⁴

After 1917, the cities of the USSR were stripped of their official symbols and emblems, which were replaced by Soviet state symbols. The revival of the practice of “urban heraldry,” if one could call it that, was associated with the Khrushchev Thaw. The new municipal symbols and emblems were to become part of Soviet monumental propaganda and serve “the cause of communist education.” Coats of arms were chosen mainly through open competitions and approved at meetings of city councils. The emblems of Zaporizhzhia and Odesa were adopted in 1967. The emblem of Zaporizhzhia combined elements that reflected the Cossack and Soviet periods in the city's history: a Cossack saber, *bandura* (a folk musical instrument), and *bunchuk* (a Cossack standard) were combined with a foundry bucket, gear, and the image of the Dnieper Hydroelectric Power Plant. The emblem of Odesa was also eclectic: the image of the battleship Potemkin and the gold star of a Hero City coexisted with the traditional silver ship's anchor. The emblems of Donetsk and Kharkiv were approved in 1968. The image of a golden hand holding a rock pick hammer was placed in the center of the emblem of Donetsk (Ishchenko, 2006). Kharkiv's emblem included a color image of the flag of the Ukrainian SSR, a golden gear, and a golden ear of wheat entwined with the electron orbits of an atom (Saratov, 2008, pp. 149–152). The emblem of Dnipropetrovsk (1970) featured a silver foundry bucket (symbolizing the foundry industry) and the city's natural landscape (Ishchenko, 2006).

⁴ Despite Iuzivka's lack of a coat of arms, in the early 1990s an attempt was made to find a historical emblem for the city of Donetsk. The municipal newspaper *Gorod* [The City] included in its own logo an image of a heraldic shield with two crossed rock hammers held by two gnomes. Some readers interpreted the image as the traditional coat of arms of Donetsk. However, this rather common emblem of mining was not the heraldic device of Iuzivka; it was found on the cover of Theodore Friedgut's book *Iuzovka and Revolution* (1989, 1994).



Fig. 1. The twentieth-century emblems of Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa, and Kharkiv.

Typically, Soviet urban emblems were vague and overbearingly ideological, lacked individuality, and ignored heraldic traditions. Perhaps that is why the vast majority of Soviet-era city emblems proved unviable and in the 1990s began to be replaced by historic coats of arms or modern logos. Thus, Kharkiv's 1781 coat of arms with the cornucopia and caduceus was restored in 1995 (*Opys symboliky*, n.d.). In 2001, a new coat of arms of Dnipropetrovsk was approved. It features a crossed silver saber and arrow – symbols of the Cossack tradition. In addition, three heptagonal silver stars represent several concepts: Cossack traditions, the natural landscape of the city, and metallurgy as the city's chief industry (*Symvolika mista*, n.d.-a). Zaporizhzhia acquired a new emblem in 2003. It is based on the historic 1811 coat of arms of Oleksandrivsk and underscores the city's glorious Cossack past. However, instead of a crown, the cartouche of the coat of arms contains a stylized image of the Dnieper Hydroelectric Power Plant (*Symvolika mista*, n.d.-b). The Donetsk city council, on the other hand, reaffirmed the city's Soviet emblem in 2004; it was to embody the city's labor traditions. As a result of the Russian-Ukrainian war, in 2014 the so-called "Donetsk People's Republic" was established, with its own symbols, including the coat of arms, flag, and anthem.

The approval of a new coat of arms for Odesa turned out to be a longer and more controversial process. A design competition was launched in 1992. The following year, a project was approved that depicted a silver ship's anchor and the gold star of a Hero City. In 1994, the mayor initiated a new contest. The jury did not pick a winner, but recommended restoring the historic 1798 coat of arms (Kalmakan & Emel'ianov, 1995). In 1999, the city council approved a new project, depicting a silver ship's anchor on a red background. In 2010, a working group was set up, tasked with finalizing the city's coat of arms, and a new competition for the best design was announced. In 2011, the city's full and small coats of arms were approved without significant changes (*Reshenie Odesskogo gorodskogo soveta*, n.d.).

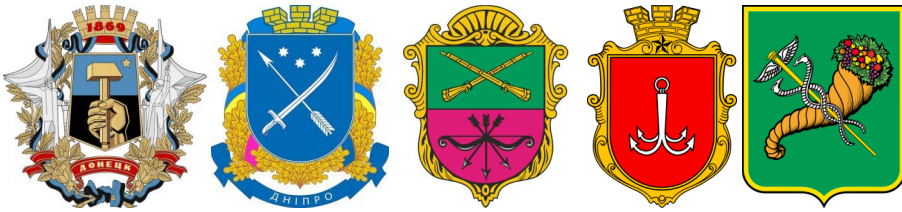


Fig. 2. The current coats of arms of Donetsk, Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa, and Kharkiv.

Today, the consolidating function of municipal coats of arms is gaining increasing importance. In addition, they are gradually becoming an instrument of a purposeful and systematic policy of urban branding. Along with stylistically updated versions of historic coats of arms, modern logos are coming into fashion (Pasturo, 2003, p. 41). In the symbolic space of the cities under study, most often the coat of arms and the logo are used alongside each other.

The 2000s and 2010s were a period of the active creation of city logos. The process was decentralized and sporadic. Many design companies threw their hats in the ring. The adoption of new city logos was often preceded by mass events, particularly sports tournaments and cultural festivals. For example, the new logos for Kharkiv and Donetsk were designed for use during the 2012 European Football Championship. The main element of Kharkiv's logo was the Mirror Stream fountain (one of the city's iconic landmarks) (*Kharkiv vyznachyv lohotyp*, 2008), and Donetsk's – a red diamond, symbolizing in particular the region's coal spoil tips and a rose (*U Donets'ku prezentovano lohotyp*, 2010).

Official logos not only served as more modern emblems of their cities, but also were used in fashioning attractive city brands. Their creation was always initiated by the local government. Thus, a new logo “Kharkiv – the Smart City” was presented in 2011; it was to become the tourist brand of the city. Each letter of the word “Smart” stood for certain epithets that characterized the essence of today's Kharkiv: *social, modern, art, research, tourist* (Musiiezdov, 2016, pp. 160–161). The tourist logo of Odesa also appeared thanks to the initiative of the municipal authorities in 2012 (*Rozporiadzhennia Odes'koho mis'koho holovy*, 2012). The logo and the city's brand book were created by the Art. Lebedev Studio from Russia, which proposed using an anchor as the chief motif. The motto of the brand was “I Love Odesa” (*Rukovodstvo po ispol'zovaniuu*, 2012). The tourist logos of Dnipro and Zaporizhzhia were approved in 2017. The logo “Zaporizhzhia – Seven Ways to Adventure” featured a heptagonal star formed by the

intersection of stripes of various colors and symbolizing the intersection of the city's seven tourist routes (*Symvolika mista*, n.d.-b). Dnipro's logo was chosen in an open competition. The logo with the motto "Dnipro – the Exciting City" was part of the city's brand book and combined the image of a heraldic shield with a stylized wave and the letter D (*Dnipro design*, n.d.; *U Dnipro obraly brend*, 2017).



Fig. 3. The modern tourist logos of Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa, and Kharkiv.

Another important municipal symbol, connected with the coat of arms, is the flag (and in some cases the city standard). The central element of the flags and standards of all five cities under study is their coat of arms. Municipal symbols also include the anthem, which is performed during various ceremonial events. We should note that Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kharkiv do not have officially approved anthems. In 2012, the Dnipro city council adopted as the anthem for the city the Soviet song "Dnipropetrovsk – My Native Home" (1970). In 2014, a number of council members refused to perform it for political reasons (Tvara, 2018). In 2018, a contest with the name "Songs ProDnipro" was announced with the aim to create a new city anthem. The city anthem of Odesa, adopted in 2011, is another Soviet relic – "A Song about Odesa" from the operetta "The White Acacia" (*Reshenie Odesskogo gorodskogo soveta*, n.d.).

Another component of urban branding is the adoption of new symbolic forms and objects. The mayoral livery collar has become especially popular in this regard. It is worn by the mayors of Dnipro, Odesa, and Kharkiv. Similar insignia of the mayoral office were widespread in the cities of the Russian Empire; they were worn by mayors during the discharge of their official duties.⁵ However, the tradition of their use disappeared in Soviet times. In Ukraine, the mayoral insignia (in the form of livery collars) were revived mainly in the early 2000s. Interestingly, they are supposed to signify not the revival of pre-Soviet traditions, but the intention to follow Western

⁵ According to the Municipal Regulations of 1870, in the Russian Empire insignia bearing the municipal coat of arms were to be worn by mayors, members of city councils, and officers of the commercial and economic police. As a rule, the mayor's insignia consisted of a livery collar with the municipal coat of arms depicted on it. In addition, a special mayoral uniform was created. Office insignia were to be worn during both ceremonial events and the performance of official duties.

cultural models. There is no established tradition of using municipal office insignia in Ukraine.



Fig. 4. The livery collar of the mayor of Kharkiv (2010). Source of the photograph: Kharkiv Municipal Enterprise “City Information Center.” <http://www.infocity.kharkov.ua/uk/gallery/simvolika-g-harkova-i-firmennyi-stil-harkovskogo-gorodskogo-soveta-45.html>.

Patron Saints of Cities as an Example of the Revival of a Pre-Soviet Urban Tradition

The tradition of holy figures as patrons of towns became widespread in Central and Eastern Europe during the Middle Ages. Every city had one or more patron saint, usually canonized by the church. Their images were widely replicated on attributes of city government and throughout the urban space (for example, on city walls), and eventually acquired the characteristics of emblems (Drelicharz & Piech, 2004, pp. 103–111).

In Soviet times, the symbolic function of cities’ patron saints was performed by revolutionary, party or state, and military figures, with monumental sites of memory dedicated to them. Perhaps the most notable in this regard are monuments to Lenin, located in the main square of every major city and serving as the foci of all principal celebrations and festivities (Haïdaï, 2018).

Starting in the 1990s, a rather sporadic search for new patron saints began. It was usually initiated by the local elites and had strongly political overtones, but the growing religiosity of Ukrainian society (TSentr Razumkova, 2020) also became an important factor in this process, along with the eagerness to revive the pre-Soviet urban traditions while also imitating European cultural models. The success of the search for municipal patron saints depended on support from the local authorities and ethno-confessional interest groups. In particular, attempts by religious

communities to establish canonized church figures and saints as city patrons became widespread. For example, during the 2000s, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate proclaimed the martyr Oleksandr (Petrovs'kyi) the holy patron of Kharkiv and its residents. Serving as the archbishop of Kharkiv, he was arrested by the Soviet regime in 1938 and perished in a prison cell in 1940. A church of the Holy Martyr Oleksandr, Archbishop of Kharkiv, was built during 1999–2004. In 2010, as part of the celebration of City Day, a monument in his honor was unveiled and consecrated near the church (*U Khar'kova poiavilsia pokrovitel'*, 2010). The sculpture depicts the Holy Martyr Oleksandr, pointing with one hand to the book he holds in the other. Apparently, the martyr enjoins his audience to live in accordance with the gospel principles. Overall, the monument well illustrates the modern iconography of municipal patron saints, which is only partially based on pre-Soviet models. The symbolic attributes of such figures are often accidental and express artistic ideas rather than serve as a tribute to tradition.

Each of the cities under study has several holy patrons. For instance, the patron saint of Dnipro is the Great Martyr St. Catherine of Alexandria (third to fourth centuries). For obvious reasons, St. Catherine was chosen as the main patron saint of the city as far back as the eighteenth century, when the city was named Katerynoslav in honor of the empress Catherine the Great. Today, the image of St. Catherine lies at the base of the respective imperial historical narratives. In 2006, a four-meter-tall statue of her was installed on the pediment above the entrance to the main diocesan administration building (D'iakon Georgii Skubak, 2006).

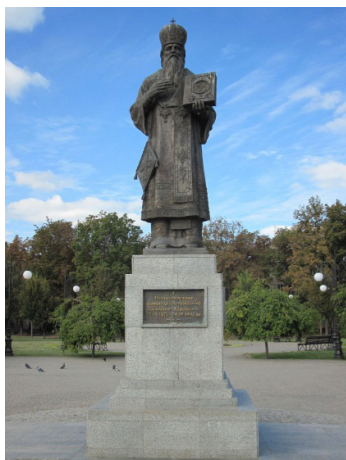


Fig. 5. The monument in honor of the Holy Martyr Oleksandr in Kharkov and the statue of the Great Martyr St. Catherine in Dnipro. Photographs by Yevhen Rachkov, 2019.

A municipal patron saint usually also performs the same function for the entire historic region centered on the city. Given the confessional structure of the population of eastern and southern Ukraine, where more than 60 per cent of all believers are Orthodox Christians (TSentr Razumkova, 2020), it is not surprising that the vast majority of municipal patrons are Orthodox saints. Each of them is associated with specific local legends and miracles, which enjoy certain popularity among the believers and periodically come to the attention of local journalists and historians. At the same time, it should be admitted that urban residents generally know rather little about their holy patrons (Interviews with residents of Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa and Kharkiv, 2020–2021, conducted by Ye. Rachkov; 12 interviews). The latter are almost unrepresented in the symbolic space of their cities, except for rare monuments. Patron saints are mostly remembered during religious holidays and processions, as well as official municipal celebrations.

Founding Myths

The process of constructing the history of a city is often fraught with controversy and inclines towards myth-making. All five Ukrainian cities examined in this article have witnessed confrontations between different historical narratives (primarily national and imperial) (Kas'ianov, 2018b, p. 50). For agents of memory, their city's founding myth is an important means of justifying modern political orientations and legitimizing the socio-political processes they live through. It is no coincidence that the question of a city's founding story tends to come to the fore in connection with pivotal socio-political transformations (revolutions, wars, etc.). Thus, founding myths are an important resource for the formation of municipal identity.

Discussions regarding the founding of Dnipro have given rise to several historical narratives. Today, the commonly accepted version places the founding of the city in 1776. It owes its dominance to the celebration of the bicentenary of Dnipropetrovsk and the 70th birthday of the leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Leonid Brezhnev in 1976. In contrast, after the Orange Revolution, a proportion of the local public came out in favor of moving the date of the city's birth to 1645, when the town of New Kodak was founded. The emphasis would thus be placed on the Cossack phase in the city's history (Kas'ianov, 2018b, pp. 54–56).

There are also several versions of the founding of Donetsk. According to the traditional one, which conforms to the widespread image of Donbass as an industrial region, the history of the city began in 1869, when workers from the village of Iuzivka began construction on a metallurgical plant.

However, the village of Iuzivka received the status of a town only in 1917. Another version highlights the Cossack past of the city, insisting on the year 1779, when the settlements of Oleksandrivka and Krutoiarivka were founded (Tymoshenko, 2019). This version is defended by some Donetsk historians, but so far it has not received much support from the public and the local authorities.

The situation around the founding date of Zaporizhzhia is more controversial. From the beginning of the twentieth century, the city's founding was dated to 1770, when construction began on Alexander Fortress and its *forsthad* (suburb). However, according to historian Ruslan Shykhonov, in the 1990s this date began to be questioned. Based on new archeological finds and evidence of treatises and chronicles, a number of local journalists and researchers proposed to see as the first settlements on the site of modern Zaporizhzhia the outpost of Protovche on the island of Khortytsia (eleventh to fourteenth centuries) and Dmytro Vyshnevetskyi's castle on the island of Mala (Little) Khortytsia (sixteenth century). A new attempt to reconsider the commonly accepted date of the city's founding was made in 2008, when a special working group was established by a decision of the city council. Its work lasted several years. Finally, in 2012 the group submitted a report in which it proposed to consider the year 952 as the date of the foundation of the first permanent settlement on the site of modern Zaporizhzhia. On that date, the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus mentioned "the Ford of Vrar" and the island of Khortytsia in his treatise *On the Administration of the Empire*. In 2014, the municipal council approved this proposal. The new date (952) was to be taken into account during ceremonial events (including City Day). However, it met with little enthusiasm. Many politicians, activists, and scholars rejected it and called it a "fake," citing weak argumentation and the absence of a direct historical and cultural connection between these faint traces in historical sources and modern Zaporizhzhia (Shykhonov, 2020). Ukraine's central government also ignored the city's decision. Eventually, in 2010 the city celebrated its 240th anniversary, and in 2020 – 250th.

There are several competing versions of the founding story of Odesa. According to the traditional one, the city was born in 1794 as a naval and commercial port. Other versions suggest looking for the beginnings of urban settlement on the site of modern Odesa in earlier periods of history, including antiquity. It should be noted that the traditional version of the city's origin is quite prominently represented in the symbolic space of Odesa (in particular, the monuments "To the Founders of Odesa" and "Mother Odesa," the monument to the Duke de Richelieu, and others) (Kas'ianov, 2018b, pp. 50–52). Debates around the historical roots of the city

intensified after the Euromaidan Revolution, when not only its cultural, but also geopolitical affiliation came to be at stake. The issue of Odesa's founding story even led to a conflict between the regional and city authorities. In 2015, the regional government supported the idea of celebrating the 600th anniversary of Odesa, which would have demonstrated the Cossack roots of the city. Instead, the municipal government defended the established date of 1794 (Dovhopolova, 2015).

Notably, this or that date of a city's birth usually comes to the fore in the public consciousness in large part thanks to the celebration of City Days and city anniversaries and other ceremonial events. For example, at least three dates of Kharkiv's founding (1654, 1655, and 1656) arose at one point or another in the public space of the city. Its tercentenary was celebrated in 1956, with ceremonial events held in September 1955. In turn, the 325th anniversary of the city was celebrated in June 1981. The celebration of the 335th anniversary took place in September 1991 on Kharkiv's City Day. The year 1654 finally prevailed in August 2004, as the city celebrated its 350th birthday. With the support of the local authorities, a monument "To the Founders of Kharkiv," specifically the Cossack Khar'ko, was erected on the occasion of the anniversary. The construction of the monument was financed by the city of Moscow, and the sculpture of the Cossack was copied from an engraving from a book by the Kharkiv historian Dmytro Bahaliĭ. However, the monument almost immediately came under public criticism. For instance, some historians noted that the figure of the Cossack Khar'ko was fictional, and his costume was not historically authentic (Kas'ianov, 2018b, pp. 56–57).



Fig. 6. The monument "To the Founders of Kharkiv," unveiled in 2004.
Photograph by Yevhen Rachkov, 2021.

The Symbolic Space and Ritual Practices of Large Cities

Invented tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983), expressed in symbolic and ritual practices, is an important component of the urban cultural and symbolic space. The selection of sites and zones for celebration is a difficult task; they often emerge situationally. At the same time, we can speak of the existence of traditional zones of celebration, which primarily cover the central (historic) parts of cities, marked with appropriate monumental sites of memory. Until the early twentieth century, chief festive occasions in the cities under study were closely connected with Orthodox religious holidays (in particular, Easter and Christmas processions) and anniversaries (such as those of cities, the bicentenary of the Battle of Poltava, centenary of victory in the Patriotic War of 1812, and the like). Furthermore, one can find examples of the presence of corporate elements in the cultural and symbolic space of the subject cities during the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries – for instance, celebrations related to the founding of universities, ranging from inaugural acts to anniversary events, which were attended by both members of the university communities and local residents (Posokhov, 2014; Rachkov, 2018).

In Soviet times, the provincial centers under study represented striking examples of, on the one hand, the solidification of the centralized *invented tradition*, and on the other – the fashioning of local identities. Thus, the 1960s to 1980s saw a marked growth in the number of local holidays, including City Days, and a gradual increase in the scale of popular street festivities. At the same time, the late Soviet period witnessed a conservation of the established ritual patterns that took shape across the Soviet holiday calendar during the 1920s and 1930s, even despite some public resistance (Barysheva, 2017). The main festive events were the Soviet mass state holidays – first and foremost, anniversaries of the Great October Socialist Revolution (November 7), Victory Day (May 9), Lenin’s Birthday (April 22), International Workers’ Solidarity Day (May 1), International Women’s Day (March 8), etc. Generally, the iconography of urban celebrations remained unchanged throughout the Soviet era. Soviet festive choreography revolved around one core structural element – columns of demonstrators marching past rostrums occupied by city leaders, party figures, invited guests, and other persons of importance (Rol’f, 2009, p. 343). Until the end of the 1980s, the main municipal holiday was the day of a city’s liberation from the Nazi invaders.

After the collapse of the communist regime and the proclamation of Ukraine’s independence, the formation of a new festive culture began. Some Soviet holidays, primarily those associated with the revolutionary

events of 1917 and the civil war of the early twentieth century, were pushed out of the calendar. At the same time, new festive traditions took shape, often preserving elements of Soviet festive culture. For example, a prominent place in the official calendar of independent Ukraine is still occupied by May 9, March 8, etc. When we speak of a certain degree of continuity between the Soviet and modern festive traditions in Ukraine, we should note that the principal celebration venues have also remained unchanged – primarily it is the “main” street of each city and its central square (its dominant symbol until recently was a Lenin monument, which secured for the architectural complex of the square the status of the focus of the city and imparted to it a special *genius loci*). These urban spaces remain the locations of sports events and mass festivities (for example, during the celebration of New Year’s Day, whose festive canon was also laid down in Soviet times). It is in the central square that the largest mass marches and military parades take place.

During the 1990s and 2000s, the cities under study virtually avoided a large-scale “post-Communist landscape cleansing” (in the words of Mariusz Czepczyński) (Czepczyński, 2008). However, the monuments of the Soviet era inevitably became objects of “memory wars” and an obstacle to dialogue and reconciliation between different political forces, particularly nationalists and communists. The most telling example is the fate of the Lenin monuments. According to historian Oleksandra Haïdaï, they remained a vivid demonstration of the “invisible” presence of Soviet heritage, dominating the urban space of the vast majority of Ukrainian cities and towns, despite the fact that Lenin as a historical figure virtually disappeared from the public and academic discourse (Haïdaï, n.d.). However, the time during and after the Euromaidan Revolution witnessed a precipitous “Leninfall” (*leninopad*), as the vast majority of Lenin monuments in city centers were dismantled thanks to public initiative and as part of the policy of “decommunization.” In particular, the largest such monument in Ukraine was demolished on Freedom Square in Kharkiv in 2014. The activists stuck the pole of a Ukrainian flag into the lone bronze shoe that remained on the pedestal after the statue was toppled. An image of the Virgin Oranta of Kyiv was attached to the fence surrounding the pedestal (Sylaieva, 2014). In 2020, a fountain was opened on the site of the monument. In Dnipro, the local Lenin monument was also demolished in 2014; in Zaporizhzhia – in 2016. The Odesa Lenin was moved to the outskirts of the city by public demand as far back as 2006. The monument to Lenin in the central square of Donetsk still stands there today.

There are other *memory spaces* in the cities under study that broadcast various historical narratives: imperial (for instance, the monument to the

founders of Odesa, restored in 2007), Soviet (such as Kharkiv's Monument in Honor of the Proclamation of Soviet Power in Ukraine, dismantled in 2011), or national (the sculpture "The Youth of the Dnieper" in Dnipro or the National Reserve "Khortytsia"). Sometimes, Soviet *memory spaces* undergo a symbolic redefinition, as happened, for instance, in the spring of 2015 with the Soviet "Monument to the Fighters of the October Revolution" with the Eternal Flame in Kharkiv (erected in 1957): political activists replaced the old inscription with a new one, dedicated to "Heroes who gave their lives for the independence and freedom of Ukraine", and painted yellow and blue the symbolic bronze flag that is part of the sculpture (*Kharkivs'ki aktyvisty pereimenuvaly*, 2015).

A special place in the cities under study belongs to the cultural and symbolic spaces associated with World War II, the Chernobyl disaster of 1986, and much less the war in Afghanistan (1979–1989). The local elites actively use the memory of these events as a symbolic resource – one that is fueled not only by historical constructs, but also by private family memory (Kas'ianov, 2018b, pp. 111–129). During the second half of the twentieth century, in each of these five cities the day of its liberation from the Nazi invaders officially became a key community holiday (traditional celebrations in Donetsk take place every year on September 8, in Dnipro – on October 25, Zaporizhzhia – on October 14, Odesa – on April 10, and Kharkiv – on August 23). For instance, the main local *memory space* associated with the Day of the Liberation of Kharkiv is the Glory Memorial Complex (or simply the Memorial), opened in the Forest Park in 1977. The central figure of the complex is a 12-meter sculpture of a woman. Prior to its opening, the main site for the commemoration of the war was a mass grave in the Forest Park, which was marked with the sculptures of a woman and a soldier. People came to the Forest Park to honor the memory of the dead not only on Kharkiv's Liberation Day, but also on Victory Day, the anniversaries of the liberation of Ukraine (October 28) and the outbreak of the war (June 22) and other occasions. The Soviet scenario of commemorating the dead included several mandatory elements: a laying of wreaths at the Memorial by government officials and invited delegations; performance of the national anthem; combat salute; honor guard of soldiers of the Kharkiv garrison and cadets of the city's military schools; and a reunion of veterans.

It should be noted that this canon of commemoration has remained virtually unchanged since 1991. Moreover, to this day the residents of the five subject cities define May 9 as one of their most important holidays. Events commemorating World War II include military parades, demonstrations of military hardware, concerts, fireworks, and the like. Until 2014, they were full of (quasi)Soviet symbolism – red flags, posters, slogans, Soviet

war medals, and St. George's ribbons, the use of which was officially banned in Ukraine by the decommunization laws. However, an increasingly prominent place in the standard scenario of celebration is occupied by mass entertainment (concerts featuring pop stars and children's troupes, flash mobs, etc.) (Kas'ianov, 2018b, pp. 148–149).

After the Euromaidan Revolution and the outbreak of the war in eastern Ukraine, a special presidential decree from 2015 initiated a reformatting of the celebration of Victory Day. In particular, commemorative events now take place on May 8 as Day of Remembrance and Reconciliation. The Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance has developed guidelines and visual materials for observing May 8 and May 9 in the European spirit of remembrance and reconciliation (*Pam'iataiemo!*, 2015). The stylized image of the red poppy became the new commemorative emblem. The graphic image, created by the Kharkiv designer Serhii Mishakin in 2014, represents both a poppy flower and a bloodied bullet wound. Next to the flower are placed the dates of the beginning and end of World War II and a slogan (such as "Never again" or "Remember. Win"). It should be noted that the new symbol caused an ambiguous reaction. In Kharkiv on May 8, 2014, representatives of various public organizations, declaring their anti-Ukrainian position, unfurled a 100-meter "St. George's flag" and marched through the city center (*100-metrovyi*, 2014). A characteristic feature of the celebration in Donetsk in 2014 was the lack of national symbols, performance of the national anthem with some technical delay, and the total dominance of St. George's ribbons. In 2015, the situation changed (at least outside the occupied zone) as the red poppy was popularized at the state level. The new symbol appeared on advertising banners in cities and on intercity highways. A wreath of poppies even adorned the 62-meter statue of the Motherland in Kyiv (Pastushenko et al., 2016).

A special place in the symbolic space of the cities under study belongs to the memory of the Holocaust. Modern researchers emphasize that the Holocaust is still perceived and publicly represented as a stand-out event that is not well integrated into the overall vision of the history of these cities and "in many respects remain[s] on the margins of public discourse in Ukraine" (Portnov, 2017, p. 347; cf. Kas'ianov, 2018b, p. 129). However, all five of them do have monuments and memorials to the victims of the Holocaust. Probably one of the largest is the Drobnyts'kyi Iar (Ravine) Memorial Complex near Kharkiv, the construction of which lasted from 1992 to 2008. Museums dedicated to the history of the Holocaust have also become a common phenomenon. The first such museum in Ukraine was opened in 1996 in Kharkiv. The Museum of the Holocaust and Memory of the Victims of Fascism appeared in Odesa in 2009, and a museum named

“The Memory of the Jewish People and the Holocaust in Ukraine” was established in Dnipro in 2012.

Modern researchers stress that, since the perestroika, the Soviet narrative of World War II has undergone significant transformations – in particular, it has become closely associated with the collective memory about the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (Kas’ianov, 2018b, pp. 149–150). The public expression of this memory prominently features nationalist marches with red and black banners, portraits of the national resistance leaders Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych, and lighted torches through the central streets of Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa, and Kharkiv. The ongoing rethinking of the Soviet legacy also found reflection in the symbolic space of the cities under study, notably in such phenomena as the commemoration of the victims of the Holodomor of 1932–1933 and the Stalinist purges. Thus, in 1989 a cross was erected in the Youth Park in Kharkiv to honor the victims of the Holodomor – the first such artifact of remembrance in Ukraine. Holodomor Remembrance Day was established in 1998, but it was not until the Orange Revolution that it began to be actively celebrated at the national and regional levels. Monuments commemorating the victims of the Holodomor appeared in Zaporizhzhia in 2007 and in Dnipro, Odesa, and Kharkiv in 2008 (Kas’ianov, 2018b, pp. 103–111). A large memorial complex for the victims of the Holodomor in Ukraine was opened in 2008 in the immediate vicinity of Kharkiv.

Among the most extensive studies of the burials of victims of World War II and the Soviet political repressions are the excavations on the 6th kilometer of the Ovidopol’ highway near Odesa (Konstantinov & Sibirtsev, 2020) and the construction of the Memorial to the Victims of Totalitarianism in the Forest Park in Kharkiv in the year 2000, on a site where victims of the Stalinist purges and Katyn massacre were buried (Zavistovskii, 2007). In June 1998, a memorial stone consecrated by Pope John Paul II was laid to mark the site of the future Cemetery of the Victims of Totalitarianism. The event was attended by President of Ukraine Leonid Kuchma and President of Poland Aleksander Kwaśniewski. The memorial complex consists of two parts: an altar and Catholic cross mark the burial place of the Polish victims, and an altar and Orthodox cross – of all others. Both parts are connected by an alley displaying information about the victims that have been identified. Symbolic mounds with crosses mark the locations of the mass graves before the exhumation (15 Polish mass graves and 60 of representatives of other nationalities). The memorial is ecumenical, featuring symbols of different religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Zavistovskii, 2007). It is often visited by relatives of the victims, as well as various Polish delegations

coming to Kharkiv. At the same time, researchers note that in the minds of the city's residents the memorial remains mostly "Polish," as it is little integrated into the local commemorative calendar (Kas'ianov, 2018b, pp. 106–107).



Fig. 7. Memorial to the Victims of Totalitarianism in Kharkiv, opened in 2000.
Photograph by Yevhen Rachkov, 2021.

Undoubtedly, a special place in the symbolic space of the cities under study belongs to the monumental sites of memory that symbolically honor Ukrainian independence. One of the first such structures in Kharkiv – a stone in honor of Ukraine's Declaration of Independence – was put up in July 1990 during a mass rally celebrating the adoption of the "Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine." It is located right next to Freedom Square and continues to serve as a site of various patriotic political rallies. For that reason, it has also repeatedly been subject to vandalism. In 2019, unknown perpetrators completely destroyed the memorial (*U tsentri Kharkova*, 2019), but it was later restored. Another example from Kharkiv is the Monument to Ukrainian Independence, which was unveiled on August 24, 2001 to mark the 10th anniversary of the event. It was a 16-meter bronze column topped with a figure of a falcon, whose wings were folded

in the shape of a trident. The figure of a 10-year-old girl was placed at the foot of the column. As is generally known, in 2009, the composition made it on the list of the top 10 most tasteless monuments to Ukraine's independence (*Top-10*, 2009). In 2012, the monument was dismantled – partly due to its kitschiness, partly due to poor placement (in the middle of a traffic intersection), and ostensibly because of the reconstruction of the square in which it was located. Kharkiv boasts another independence monument – the “Flying Ukraine,” built in 2012 on the site of a monument in honor of the proclamation of Soviet power in Ukraine (1975–2011). The new sculpture was unveiled on the eve of the 21st anniversary of Ukraine's independence and on Kharkiv's City Day. Almost immediately, it was criticized for its allegedly extremely unimaginative and archaic design. The idea of the monument was handed down “from above,” without dialogue with the community or research into the ritual practices of the city's residents.



Fig. 8. The monument “Flying Ukraine” in Kharkiv, built in 2012.

Photograph by Yevhen Rachkov, 2021.

After the Russian annexation of Crimea (2014) and the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war, a special importance in the symbolic space

of the subject cities was gained by “public memorials” spontaneously created by citizens in honor of men and women killed during the events of the Euromaidan and in the zone of the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) in eastern Ukraine. Such makeshift memorials usually consisted of portraits of the fallen, flowers, candles, and prayer items. They also included shell fragments and military equipment from the zone of the ATO and similar meaningful objects (Kas’ianov, 2018b, pp. 135–142). In recent years, monuments have been built to honor the defenders of Ukraine who died in the ATO: in Dnipro in 2017 (Ratsybars’ka, 2018), in Kharkiv (*U Kharkovi vidkryly*, 2019) and Zaporizhzhia (*U Zaporizhzhzi vidkryly*, 2019) in 2019, in Odesa in 2020 (*Vechnaia pamiat’*, 2020). At the same time, the forms of commemoration often become the subject of lively discussions. For instance, in 2018 several public organizations initiated the installation of a stone cross with trident in the Alley of Heroes in Dnipro, which caused offence to some ATO veterans, who saw this memorial complex as a space of unity for people of different faiths and nationalities (Ratsybars’ka, 2018). The commemoration of the defenders of Ukraine will certainly be continued in the future – for instance, through the establishment of special museums.



Fig. 9. The public memorial “Everything for Victory” in Kharkiv, opened in 2014.
Photograph by Yevhen Rachkov, 2021.

Soviet Urban Festivity and Modern Urban Festive Culture

The system of Soviet ritual practices included life-cycle rituals, initiation into social or political groups, mass political celebrations, and labor, calendar, and military-patriotic rituals. Christel Lane brings such ritual practices together under the umbrella concept of “political religion” – a unified system of obligatory and binding values penetrating deep into all aspects of a Soviet citizen’s life (Lane, 1981). The structural components of the Soviet ritual practices included a variety of semiotic forms expressed in such sign systems as rallies, speeches, gestures, music, songs, emblems, and the like. As Stefan Plaggenborg points out, the organization of Soviet festive events was the highest form of the representation of the Soviet political system, because such events merged together different levels of expression: word, image, movement, and enactment (Plaggenborg, 2000, p. 287). The structure of Soviet mass celebrations in the cities of eastern and southern Ukraine well illustrates this proposition. At the same time, the socio-political transformations during the second half of the 1980s and early 1990s reshaped the Soviet festive traditions. First and foremost, the functional purpose of urban celebrations changed: during this period they were called upon less to affirm the ideological dogma than to help integrate and consolidate the social system. The openness of the new festive culture to ethnic and national traditions led to the borrowing of folk festive practices and their inclusion into the officially sanctioned festive canon (Rol’f, 2009, pp. 349–350).

In contrast to Soviet celebrations, which served the needs of the communist regime in social presentation and filled gaps in the cultural space of the USSR (Rol’f, 2009, pp. 342–343), the festive traditions of 1990s to 2010s were called upon to perform more of a consolidating and representative function. It should be borne in mind that Ukraine’s modern urban culture is characterized by “hyperfestivism” (term created by Philippe Muray), that is, total festivity (Miurè, 2001). The “boundaries” between festivity and ordinary life are blurring. In contrast to the Soviet era, today the festive *chronotope* is no longer opposed to everyday life. In addition, modern urban festive culture has been gradually moving into the private sphere. Even official nation-level celebrations increasingly resemble popular festivals and/or private celebrations in informal settings – among colleagues, friends, and family. Unlike during the Soviet era, when the state strove to control the private sphere and paid special attention to regulating ritual occasions (even those related to private and family life), today Ukrainian society is experiencing a diversification of the festive landscape, based on, among others, ethnic, regional, and professional criteria.

At the same time, modern urban ritual practices largely build upon the Soviet festive traditions, adapted and rethought. An illustrative example is the persistence of the Soviet tradition of professional holidays (Metallurgist's Day, Miner's Day, Teacher's Day, etc.) and civilian *rites de passage* (obtaining a document known as national passport (which functions as a national identity card), graduating from high school, and the like). On the other hand, some forms of Soviet urban festivity, such as workers' or local (street, district) fetes are extremely rare today. Corporate traditions (celebrations organized by institutions of higher education, large enterprises, etc.) are becoming increasingly important. Another current trend in urban festivity is its commercialization and the active borrowing of "Western" patterns (for instance, the growing popularity of Valentine's Day and Halloween), which generally demonstrates the adaptability of today's festive culture in Ukraine.

Still, traditional forms of urban festivity persist. One such form is the city fair, found in the cities under study sometimes as far back as the eighteenth century. This tradition continued uninterrupted throughout the Soviet period. In the conditions of commodity deficit, Soviet-era city fairs enjoyed considerable popularity among urban residents. We can assume that such fairs were a manifestation of the social trend towards consumerism, which became more and more noticeable during the postwar decades. In the late Soviet period, fairs were part of popular festivals, held as they often were on the occasion of national (New Year's Day) or regional (City Liberation Day, City Day) holidays. The festive program included traditional entertainment, led by actors dressed in ethnic or Santa Claus (*Did Moroz*) costumes, and the like. Interestingly, fairs held nowadays generally reproduce the late Soviet canon, with a greater emphasis on stylized elements of Ukrainian folk culture. Among the most popular commercial and entertainment fairs today are the Pokrovs'kyi Fair in Zaporizhzhia and the Great Slobozhans'kyi Fair in Kharkiv.

Another illustrative example is mass sports events and youth holidays, which enjoy great popularity among the residents of the five subject cities and support from the local authorities. Bike races and marathons take place in these cities every year, with the participation of both professional athletes and ordinary residents. Sports events often have a national or international status, bringing together hundreds and even thousands of participants.⁶

⁶ For instance, the Kharkiv bicycle marathon and Odesa marathon.

The Principal Community Holidays: City Anniversaries and City Days

Despite the diversification of festive culture in today's Ukraine, city anniversaries and City Days remain the main local holidays. The tradition of celebrating city anniversaries has pre-Soviet roots (for example, the centenary of Katerynoslav in 1887, the centenary of Odesa in 1894, etc.). In the early twentieth century, anniversaries began to be used in the construction of historical (collective) memory. Scholars generally agree that Soviet anniversary celebrations were not only a channel for the propaganda of state and party policy, but also a means of overcoming the growing socio-political tensions and manifestations of crisis in the Soviet system (Bulygina & Kozhemiako, 2012, p. 64). The festive canon and contents of such municipal holidays in the USSR were defined by the celebrations of the 800th anniversary of Moscow (1947), the 250th anniversary of Leningrad (now St. Petersburg, 1957), the 1500th anniversary of Kyiv (1982), and others. Certainly, not all city anniversaries were affairs on a grand scale. While some became occasions for pompous Union-level celebrations (for example, the centenary of Donetsk in 1969, the bicentenary of Zaporizhzhia in 1970, the bicentenary of Dnipropetrovsk in 1976), others were confined to the local and regional level (the tercentenary of Kharkiv in 1956 or the 175th anniversary of Odesa in 1969).

As a rule, city anniversaries are perceived by the local public as extremely festive occasions (Interviews with residents of Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa and Kharkiv, 2020–2021, conducted by Ye. Rachkov; 12 interviews), in part because the anniversary culture is quite omnivorous and capable of embracing various forms of symbolic representation that contribute to the construction and preservation of the established historical narratives and images of cities. Consider, for instance, the celebration of the 350th anniversary of Kharkiv in August 2004. Preparations were extensive – many architectural landmarks in the city center were refurbished, new subway stations were opened, etc. The program included such elements as a large fair, a festival of children's art, a festival of retro cars, theatrical sports performances, and the publication of books dedicated to the anniversary (*Prohramy zakhodiv*, 2004). The high points of the festivities were the opening of the already-mentioned monument “To the Founders of Kharkiv,” a gala concert, and fireworks. It should be noted that programs of anniversary celebrations are often influenced by various external factors. For instance, the celebration of the 220th anniversary of Odesa in September 2014 took place against the backdrop of the Russian aggression against Ukraine; the 150th anniversary of Donetsk in August 2019 was celebrated

under foreign occupation; and most of the festive events marking the 250th anniversary of Zaporizhzhia in October 2020 were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The celebration in Zaporizhzhia included the opening of a special flower arrangement in the city park, the presentation of an anniversary coin released by the National Bank of Ukraine and an anniversary stamp and envelope courtesy of the national postal service, and the creation of an anniversary mural. Even during the pandemic, the anniversary celebration influenced the construction of the city's image. Evidently, the key symbols reproduced on the above-mentioned memorabilia (the Dnieper Hydroelectric Power Plant, a Cossack *chaika* (boat), portrait of the local historian Iakiv Novyts'kyi, and architectural landmarks of Zaporizhzhia) had the mission to reconcile supporters of the city's various and diverging historical narratives.

We should note that the algorithm of the “ceremonial ritual” laid down by city anniversaries is reproduced without significant changes in the form of the annual celebration of City Day. In Donetsk, for a long time the main city holiday was Miner's Day (the last Sunday of August), introduced in the USSR in 1947 (Fed'ko, 2009). The tradition of City Day in Dnipro began after the celebration of the bicentenary of Dnipropetrovsk in 1976. Annual festivities take place in late May and generally involve traditional festive elements, such as the laying of flowers at Soviet monuments, relay races, bike rides, street festivals, and the like (Kavun, 2011). In Odesa, the tradition of celebrating City Day in early September (the celebration usually lasts several days, and the main events take place on September 2) reaches back to the nineteenth century (*Den' Rozhdeniia Odessy*, n.d.), but became regular only in late Soviet times.

The tradition of annually celebrating City Day in Zaporizhzhia and Kharkiv, on the other hand, emerged only in the late 1980s. In both cases, it was initiated by the city authorities, demonstrating the role of local elites in modernizing the Soviet holiday calendar. The dates were picked at random. The first City Day in Zaporizhzhia was October 12, 1986 (Shy Khanov, 2020). To this day, the date of the holiday is not fixed – the city charter states that the celebration can take place on any day in October (*Statut hromady*, n.d.). The first City Day in Kharkiv fell on September 20, 1987. Until the mid-1990s, it was celebrated every year on the fourth Sunday in September, and since then – on August 23 (City Liberation Day). The change of date was politically motivated and became part of the local “memory wars,” as the emphasis shifted to the history of the liberation of Kharkiv and the events of World War II in general. This is reflected in the iconography and basic structure of the annual festivities. At the same time, since 2004, August 23 is celebrated nation-wide as the National Flag Day of Ukraine. Accordingly,

starting from the early 2000s, the program of Kharkiv's City Day began to include elements honoring Ukrainian statehood and the state symbols of Ukraine. Recently, such events as the unfurling of a giant flag of Ukraine in Freedom Square, an embroidered-shirt march, and the like have become increasingly popular (*Naïbil'shyï prapor Ukraïny*, 2011).

The "Decommunization" of Municipal Traditions

In order to streamline the calendar of public holidays and memorial days, as well as to implement the "decommunization laws," in 2017 the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance put forward a draft of a new law "On State and Other Holidays, Memorial Dates, and Days of Mourning." The project proposed a new list of state holidays and a separate list of traditional (religious) holidays and days of mourning. The following would be designated as state holidays and non-working days: Shevchenko Day (March 9), Remembrance and Reconciliation Day (May 8), Day of Ukrainian Constitution (June 28), Independence Day (August 24), Family Day (second Friday in September), and Defender of Ukraine Day (October 14). New Year's Day (January 1), Christmas (January 7), and Easter (one day, Sunday) were defined as traditional holidays. At the same time, it was proposed to abandon the celebration at the state level of May 1 and 2 (International Workers' Solidarity Day) and March 8 (International Women's Day). The explanatory note to the draft law stated that these international days were established as mass holidays and non-working days by the Bolshevik regime, were coercive in nature, and did not reflect the traditions of the Ukrainian people. The day of victory over Nazism in World War II (May 9) was to remain a state holiday, but become a working day. The main events commemorating the victims of World War II of 1939–1945 in Ukraine and honoring the memory of the victory over Nazism were to take place on Remembrance and Reconciliation Day (May 8) (*Proekt Zakonu Ukraïny*, n.d.), which had been observed since 2015.

The decommunizing thrust of the project was also emphasized by the list of mourning days and days of observance (public holiday) that were to remain working days. In particular, among the mourning days the project designated a Day of Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred, Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Chernobyl Disaster, Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Crimean Tatar Genocide, Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Political Repressions, Holocaust Remembrance Day, and Holodomor Remembrance Day. In their turn, Day of the First Independence and Unity of Ukraine, Day of the National Emblem of Ukraine, Day of the National

Anthem of Ukraine, Day of the National Flag of Ukraine, Day of Ukrainian Literature and Language, Day of Dignity and Freedom, and several others were proposed as days of observance (public holiday) and working days (*Proekt Zakonu Ukraïny*, n.d.).

The draft law did not move beyond the proposal stage. One possible explanation is that holidays with a Soviet background remain popular in Ukraine to this day, including among the inhabitants of the cities under study. At the same time, researchers note a certain decrease in their popularity during the 2010s, along with a marked uptick in interest towards national and traditional holidays (Kas'ianov, 2018b, pp. 158–159). In the legal sphere, these developments found expression in the amendments to the Labor Code of Ukraine that came into force in 2017 and according to which December 25 (Christmas according to the Gregorian calendar) was declared a non-working day. At the same time, May 2 ceased to be a holiday.

Urban Festivity During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Specialist in ritual studies Paul Post notes that many researchers expected an increase in interest towards ritual practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it did not materialize (Post, 2020). Of course, transformations of ritual practices do indeed often take place during various catastrophes and pandemics, when their integrative (consolidating) and compensatory functions come into special demand. However, there has been no noticeable change in symbolic and ritual practices in the five Ukrainian cities under study. Of course, the harsh nationwide quarantine restrictions at various times involved a partial or complete ban on mass events. However, local governments and citizens across the country have been quite determined to stick to the established celebration models (for example, to hold and attend parades and holiday concerts), despite all such obstacles. The most illustrative examples are the mass City Day celebrations in Dnipro (*Prohrama sviatkovykh zakhodiv*, 2020), Odesa (*2 sentiabria*, 2020), and Kharkiv (*Kontserty*, 2020) in 2020.

During the pandemic, some ordinary things acquired demonstrative ritual significance – for instance, various forms of greeting allowing one to maintain social distancing, or applause (often from the balconies of apartments) as a token of gratitude to health workers. Incidentally, it was the balconies of ordinary high-rise apartment buildings that transformed during the pandemic into a kind of locus of communication with the outside world. On the one hand, balconies acquired negative connotations because they became, in a sense, a zone of restriction on human freedom,

and on the other hand, it is on balconies that the existing patterns of urban culture were kept alive and new symbolic practices emerged (such as group singing, playing musical instruments, and the like). For example, on the 75th anniversary of the victory in World War II in May 2020 in Kharkiv, it was planned to hold a traditional march through the city center (“Regiment of Immortal Victory”) to the Memorial in the Forest Park. Due to the pandemic, it was decided to cancel the event. Instead, the mayor of Kharkiv called on the residents to come out on the balconies of their apartments on May 9 at 12 p.m. with photographs of relatives who fought in the war, and thus hold a citywide minute of “Silence, Memory, and Thanksgiving” (*Gennadii Kernes*, 2020).

Conclusion: The Coherence of Urban Symbolic and Ritual Practices

During the 1990s to 2010s, urban communities in southern and eastern Ukraine went through a “search for” and “invention” of new traditions that produced new semantic models and forms of their representation. Urban symbolic and ritual practices were characterized by attempts to move away from the most objectionable manifestations of Soviet festive culture and to create a fundamentally new festive canon. These developments unfolded in the face of continuous tensions between various agents of memory and were to some extent initiated at the national level, while also receiving support of local elites and urban communities. Undoubtedly, socio-political transformations, particularly those connected with the Orange Revolution, the Euromaidan Revolution, the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, and other events, contributed to this process. We should bear in mind that municipal traditions are connected in special ways with the cultural and symbolic space and cultural memory of cities. It is no coincidence that after 1991 the question of the time of the founding of cities became important – it not only had significance for their public image, but also served as ammunition in political confrontations at the local level. The historical and cultural heritage of cities became a fundamental issue. In all five of the subject cities, the national historical narrative began gaining ground. In their communal symbolic space, an increasing emphasis is placed today on images and symbols, including monumental sites of memory, which honor Ukrainian independence. Clearly, those aspects of festive culture that focus on the idea of national unity will continue to grow in importance. However, modern urban ritual practices in Ukraine are also characterized by fragmentation and decentralization. The festive landscape and topography are undergoing diversification. Most festive events are

aimed at bringing together adherents of diverging socio-political views. At the same time, attempts to control the form and contents of nation-level celebrations and unify the holiday canon have become more and more noticeable in recent years, as state holidays are given a more sharply defined ideological direction.

Today, the main municipal holidays are city anniversaries and City Days. They have taken on the character of true popular festivals and embody the evolution of the Soviet festive canon: the transition from ceremonial mass marches through city centers to street entertainment in the form of costumed carnivals, happening in several locations at the same time. The celebration scenario presupposes the involvement of various social, professional, ethnic, subcultural, and age groups of residents. Nevertheless, no large-scale “ceremonial revolution” has taken place in the decades after 1991. The modern festive culture of large Ukrainian cities is quite eclectic, combining at least several components: a “new” style of festivity generally based on borrowed “Western” cultural patterns; “traditional” forms stressing national aspects and attempting to revive pre-Soviet cultural models; and “Soviet” forms that perpetuate the Soviet festive canon, often reinterpreted within the framework of the new urban tradition. Soviet symbolic and ritual practices have been partially adapted to these new traditions; they have begun to serve new purposes while continuing to influence the cultural and symbolic space of the subject cities and the *urban imaginary*. Overall, the process of constructing a new model of urban festivity in Ukraine is far from complete; this emerging cultural complex remains fluid and capable of “turning” towards the festive traditions of different historical periods.

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Символічні та ритуальні практики в пострадянському міському середовищі: символічний простір і святкування в містах Східної та Південної України протягом 1990–2010-х рр.

Стаття присвячена дослідженню символічних і ритуальних практик п'яти міст Південної та Східної України – Дніпра, Донецька, Запоріжжя, Одеси та Харкова – протягом 1990–2010-х рр. Відзначається, що міські символічні та ритуальні практики (передовсім, виражені у таких символічних формах, як міські урочисті церемонії та свята) особливим чином пов'язані з культурно-символічним простором міста. Насамперед, вони являють собою своєрідні «символічні медіатори» культурної пам'яті міста та беруть участь у зберіганні, трансляції та актуалізації культурних смислів міста. Протягом 1990–2010-х рр. для міських символічних і ритуальних практик в Україні були характерними спроби позбутися найбільш одіозних проявів радянської святкової культури та створити принципово новий святковий канон. Частково ці процеси відбувалися в межах так званої «деколонізації історичної пам'яті», ініціаторами якої

була центральна влада та міські спільноти. Безперечно, сприяли цьому суспільно-політичні трансформації, зокрема, пов'язані з Помаранчевою революцією (2004 р.) та Єврореволюцією (2013–2014 рр.), російською збройною агресією проти України тощо. Водночас, процеси трансформації радянських символічних і ритуальних практик були помірними: зміна політичного режиму не призвела до масштабної «церемоніальної революції». Сучасна українська святкова культура передбачає поєднання, часто доволі еkleктичне, щонайменше кількох складових: «нової» святкової традиції, що загалом базується на запозичених «західних» культурних зразках; «традиційної», що містить національні акценти та являє собою спробу відродження дорадянських культурних зразків; «радянської», що зберігає радянський святковий канон, часто він адаптований та переосмислений у нових міських традиціях. Загалом, маємо підстави казати про незавершеність процесу конструювання нової міської святкової культури в Україні, що характеризується невизначеністю та можливостями «повороту» до святкових традицій різних історичних епох.

Ключові слова: символічні практики, ритуальні практики, великі міста, Україна.

Praktyki symboliczne i rytualne w postsowieckim środowisku miejskim: przestrzeń symboliczna i obchody świąt w miastach wschodniej i południowej Ukrainy w latach 90. i na początku XXI w.

Artykuł jest poświęcony badaniu praktyk symbolicznych i rytualnych w pięciu miastach południowej i wschodniej Ukrainy: Dnieprze, Doniecku, Zaporozżu, Odessie i Charkowie, w latach 1990-2010. Symboliczne oraz rytualne praktyki miejskie (wyrażone przede wszystkim przy użyciu takich form symbolicznych jak miejskie święta, uroczystości) są szczególnie związane z kulturą i symboliczną przestrzenią miasta. Są one przede wszystkim swego rodzaju „symbolicznymi mediatorami” kulturowej pamięci miasta i uczestniczą w utrwalaniu, transmitowaniu i aktualizowaniu jego kulturowych znaczeń. W latach 90. i dwóch pierwszych dekadach XXI w. miejskie praktyki symboliczne i rytualne w Ukrainie charakteryzowały się próbami pozbycia się najbardziej odrażających

przejawów sowieckiej kultury świętowania oraz stworzenia zupełnie nowego kanonu świąt. Po części procesy te odbywały się w ramach tzw. dekolonizacji pamięci historycznej, inicjowanej przez władze centralne i społeczności miejskie. Niewątpliwie ułatwiły to przemiany społeczno-polityczne, w szczególności związane z pomarańczową rewolucją (2004) oraz Euromajdanem (2013-2014), rosyjską agresją zbrojną na Ukrainę itp. Jednocześnie procesy transformacji sowieckich praktyk symbolicznych i rytualnych były umiarkowane: zmiana ustroju politycznego nie doprowadziła do „rewolucji ceremonialnej” na dużą skalę. Współczesna ukraińska kultura świąteczna łączy, często dość eklektycznie, przynajmniej kilka elementów: „nową” tradycję świąteczną, która na ogół opiera się na zapożyczonych „zachodnich” wzorcach kulturowych; element „tradycyjny”, zawierający akcenty narodowe i będący próbą ożywienia przedsowieckich wzorców kulturowych; „sowiecki”, który zachowuje sowiecki kanon świąteczny, jest często adaptowany do nowych tradycji miejskich. Ogólnie rzecz biorąc, można zauważyć, że proces budowy nowej miejskiej kultury świętowania w Ukrainie nie jest ukończony i charakteryzuje się niepewnością i możliwością „zwrócenia się” do tradycji świątecznych różnych epok historycznych.

Słowa kluczowe: praktyki symboliczne, praktyki rytualne, duże miasta, Ukraina

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