

Nebesna Sotnia

Formation of a New Narrative from Protest Lore to Institutionalized Commemorative Practice

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[See table of contents](#)

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Article abstract

The one hundred people shot dead on the Maidan were given the collective name Heavenly Hundred (*Nebesna Sotnia*). It became the central memory of the uprising; a hymn, a new state award, a national memorial day, poetry, monuments, memorial plaques and books were produced. Dozens of streets and squares were renamed in different regions.

The paper focuses on the interpretations of large-scale historical events (the Cossack, the Ukrainian National Republic and World War II), and their incorporation into a new institutionalized narrative after drastic societal events on the example of the protests in Ukraine known as the Maidan in the winter of 2014. The research is based on original protest lore, 8905 Facebook posts from 1647 individuals, collected by the author on the day they were published on Facebook between January 19 – February 28, 2014. This timeframe includes both peaceful days and the most dramatic confrontation of the protests. The data originally was organized in 5 categories and 16 topics.

The paper provides evidence of how personal stories function and validate the participants' experiences and the significance of the events from the protestors' perspectives; and protest lore impact on institutional changes of commemorative practices in the field of collective memory.

NEBESNA SOTNIA¹

Formation of a New Narrative from Protest Lore to Institutionalized Commemorative Practice²

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What is the Maidan

The protests in Kyiv, Ukraine, in the winter of 2014 took place on the *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* 'Independence Square' (simply called "Maidan" or "EuroMaidan" or in Ukrainian: Майдан / Євромайдан [The Square] or [The Euro[pean] Square]).³ Celebrations and protests located on Independence Square have usually focused on national issues, rather than municipal affairs. During the protests the word "Maidan" gained additional meanings, including the act of public politics itself. Based on my research, Western media and researchers outside of Ukraine used the name "Euromaidan" more often than did Ukrainian citizens and participants in the protests; the latter preferred to use the name "Maidan." This difference reveals the varied perceptions of the cause of the protests and makes clear whether a

1. The *Heavenly Hundred* (or *Nebesna Sotnia* in Ukrainian) is a collective name given to all people who died on the Maidan, as an historical event, forms of its memorialization, and re-assessment of particular historical periods that contributed to the new narrative.
2. I am deeply grateful to my MA supervisor, Dr. Andriy Nahachewsky, for his engaged and supportive role in my thesis; he is an outstanding and motivating example of how to balance high academic standards with devotion to work. I am very thankful to Dr. Bohdan Medwidsky, the founder of the Folklore program at the University of Alberta who supported me and gave an opportunity to study and to grow professionally in the last several years. The scholarship of the program, the staff members of the Bohdan Medwidsky Ukrainian Folklore Archives, and the Kule Centre for Ukrainian and Canadian Folklore, faculty and students of MLCS and Anthropology departments have provided me with great support.
3. The Ukrainian word *maidan* is derived from the Arabic مَيدَان [maydān] meaning "square" or "field."

particular author refers to the events as focused on international relations or having an internal locus. I will use “Maidan” in this paper, since the focus is on Ukrainian attitudes toward the events.

The protests started as a rally on the night of November 21, 2013 on the *Maidan Nezalezhnosti*. Protesters objected to the government’s decision to forego signing an Association Agreement that had been in preparation for a year and would have paved the way for the possible integration of the country into the European Union (EU). Instead of signing it, Yanukovych arranged for a loan from Russia. This drew Ukraine closer to the Russian sphere of influence. The rally was patterned on the Orange Revolution of 2004, a protest against electoral fraud during presidential elections. Just as protesters then had succeeded in overturning the results of the 2004 election, so too protesters in 2013-14 sought to oust the government. The scope of the protests later expanded, with many calling for the resignation of President Viktor Yanukovych and his government. Ultimately, after the escalation and more than one hundred protestors losing their lives, Yanukovych fled to Russia, although he did not resign the presidency. Great upheaval followed his departure, including Russia’s annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Donbass. Many additional protestors joined the rally after the violent dispersal of the crowds on the night of November 30, 2013.

At this point, the term “Maidan” began to refer to a political movement, not only to a location in the capital city. Protesters used the term accordingly.⁴ A number of posts in my collection discuss the perception of *Maidan*, a term whose original meaning was simply a location, but grew to convey political attitudes even after people had dispersed from the square.

My methodology

The topic of this research came to me on its own. In the beginning of my Masters Program, in the fall of 2013, I had an idea to do a project about personal narratives that reflect life-changing circumstances and experiences tracing different generations of the same extended family or different representatives of the same group, preferably Ukrainian Canadians in Western Canada. I had no intention of dealing with social media or social networking at all. My first draft proposal of the potential project was almost done by the end of the 2013 fall term when the events unfolding in

4. Timothy Snyder suggests that the word “Maidan” has now gained the meaning of the Greek word *agora* in English, it is not just a physical place, but also a meeting with a purpose “to deliberate, to speak, and to create a political society.” (Snyder 2014)

Ukraine riveted my attention. Initially, I was emotionally engrossed, and later I noticed a pattern between the frequency of Facebook post types and the character of the events on each particular day.

Facebook texts served me for several purposes: on the one hand, they provided a variety of narratives, so that I could analyze the correlation of their types, forms, genres and functions; on the other hand, they served as a source of timely information about a particular event. Jennifer Dickinson considers social media and livestreamed video from the Maidan as a “tactical tool for mobilization and formation of interpretive frames” (Dickinson 2014). Due to the time difference, the most drastic events at night in Ukraine took place during the evening in Edmonton, Canada. Following live broadcasts, personal posts, and blogs, I got the information virtually at the moment it occurred and before it was released by professional media.

I restrained myself from deleting any individuals from the time I began systematically gathering data. I included publications of some individuals whom I would not normally have chosen if it had been for my own pleasure, but they were few. I controlled my Facebook settings in a way which allowed me to follow several individuals specifically because they updated their accounts many times per day and thus served as informative and interpretative sources. My collection represents the division into two opposing sides that occurred in real life, as Facebook participants worked through textual representations including their confrontations, interactions and efforts to have a dialogue. In general, my Facebook collection is very pro-Maidan. A significant part of my connections are bilingual or Russian speakers, but there are many Ukrainian and English speakers as well. Many of them are also parishioners of various Christian denominations in Ukraine; they have various ethnic origins. My list of authors resembles the variety of protestors that can be compared to other studies (Etling 2014).

In order to give more background related to my Facebook connections, I should add that I created my account at the time I worked in the academic humanities book publishing field, in Kyiv 2009-2013. Initially I used my account mostly for professional purposes and my connections were built around the field; there was more variety later. Until late November 2013, most of what I got from Facebook were new book releases, authors' public lectures, seminars, conferences, and a bit of private life. When the majority of those connections started to narrate, reflect, and exclaim mostly, and sometimes exclusively, about the political protests, it was a strong signal of a matter significant to me.

Exploring the types of narratives and their contribution to identify the opposing sides, I focus on elements in the digital stories that illuminate elements not exposed by the professional media coverage and official reports. The general focus of the study is to look through the diverse forms, topics and expressive devices in the narratives. I will sort the categories of lore (eyewitness narratives, (re)telling of stories, jokes, poetry, songs, etc.) found in the narratives, informal reflections and comments about the events. I juxtaposed the patterns found in the text with the main events of each specific day. I define these all broadly as “folk” elements according to the concepts of *Newslore* identified by Russel Frank (2011) and *Xeroxlore* by Alan Dundes and Carl Pagter (1987).

Facebook was a key space for sharing emotions, personal stories, humor and expressive forms of protest, making allusions to known literary works, historical events and world public figures.

In “Maidan folklore 2004,” Natalia Lysiuk (2005) defines the material she gathered as a “postfolklore” phenomenon of spontaneous groups and assemblies formed with the free will of the participants and for a limited period in time. She notes that no age, social, confessional, regional or ethnic distinctions were inherent in this gathering. I argue that Lysiuk’s definition applies to the protest folklore on Facebook related to Maidan 2013-2014 as well.⁵ I use examples from Facebook only because this social media was my primary “field” of research for material collected at the time of the protests. Because social media settings prevent me from gathering more material from other sources corresponding to the time frame of the

5. Consistent with this understanding of folklore, Dundes redefined the concept of folk as any group of people “whatsoever who share at least one common factor.” Examples of factors that define folk groups include families, localities, religious and ethnic groups, hobbyists, and occupational groups (Dundes 1980:7). Frank speaks of folklore as “a kind of informal or spontaneous or homemade communication in which members of all groups engage at least some of the time” (Frank 2011: 8). The concept of “postfolklore” suggested by Sergey Neklyudov as a kind of urban folklore prompted discussion among Slavic folklore theorists (Neklyudov, 1995). Pozdneev characterizes the beginning of the twenty-first century not as “postfolklore,” but rather as “postfolklore culture” in which “all traditional genres are secondary and borrowed from literature.” Panchenko suggests: “village culture of the new times is not much more ‘folkloric’ or ‘traditional’ than the mass culture of the modern city” (McCormick 2011:1017). East European definitions of “postfolklore” presume the contemporary research approach differs from the 19th century concept of folklore as ancient rural oral tradition. The variety of concepts emphasizes different nuances in contemporary urban folklore. I follow Dundes’ and Frank’s concepts inherited by the North American tradition of folklore that include the possibility of diverse groups.

Facebook research, I have not included other social media in this analysis.⁶

My general collection has 8905 Facebook posts, from 1647 authors, in the period January 19 – February 28, 2014, collected day by day from my newsfeed the day they were published. I spent several hours a day collecting new updates on each particular day. The size of the collection ranges from 65 up to 473 posts per day, a reflection of my personal engagement in the events on any given day, as well as my ability to allocate enough time while respecting other commitments. I counted the frequency of posts based on their percentage of the total number of posts (but not of their cardinal number per day) and traced their correlation to the events. I assigned the posts for each day to specific cells in a table according to 5 categories and 16 topics.

The categories I have created correspond with the main response of a particular author to an event, i.e. telling one's own eyewitness story or a story about a third person; reacting with a joke, ironically, etc.; trying to initiate an action or to respond to others' initiatives; reflecting on the events; or a wide spectrum of emotions, clearly different than the other reflections and factual discussion. I created five categories: *Humor*, *Storytelling*, *Coordination*, *Comments*, *Reflections* and *Emotions* to sort out the collected material. I allocated 16 topics of the posts in the same sequence I found them in one or another post in my data.

I distributed each post of the collection into one category and one topic respectively, in order for the total sum of all posts per day to equal 100%. As a cultural insider I am quite confident in my understanding of the authors' intent in delivering their particular message to others. This is an effort to give a picture of the reflections and perceptions of the events, both from the authors' views and my own view as an engaged researcher.

6. Frank argues that Internet folklore is important for three reasons: (1) the phenomenon is widespread; (2) the phenomenon reveals widely held attitudes and widely shared preoccupations; and (3) the phenomenon is largely ignored and should not be, given (1) and (2) (2011:10). He claims that the function of Internet folklore is mainly to highlight social and political problems and to "free [people] from tensions and frustration" (2011:12). He also suggests that the role of political folklore is "like a sneer, the weapon of the weak," referring to Gregor Benton, who wrote: "[...] the political joke will change nothing. [...] It is not a form of active resistance. [...] It will mobilize no one. [...] It is important for keeping society sane and stable" (1988: 35). On the contrary, Jennifer Dickinson described the Internet-activity of the protesters as a means to reinforce their actions on the square (Dickinson 2014:79). My research shows that Dickinson's characterization is a more accurate reflection of the Maidan lore, but additional consideration of this issue is beyond the scope of this paper.

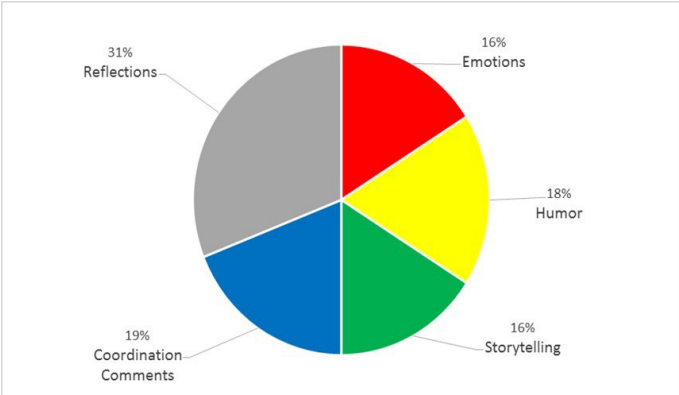


Chart 1. Five categories of the analysis

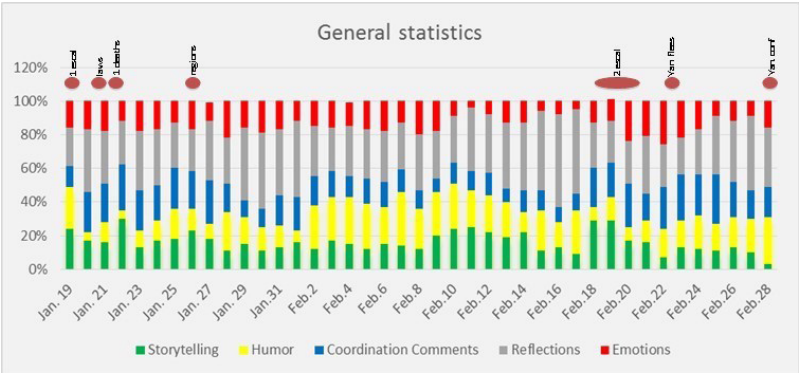


Chart 2. Frequency of use of the Categories over time

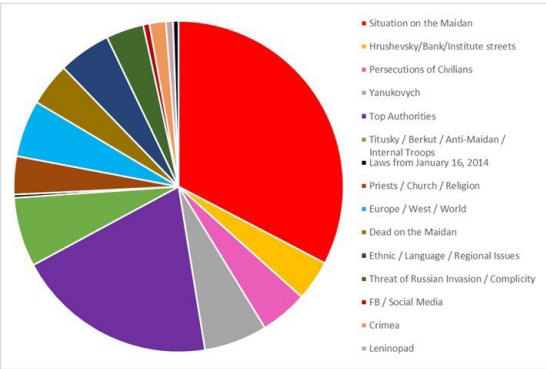


Chart 3. Frequency of Topics

Chart 1 shows the overall distribution of posts among the categories.

The categories are not equally distributed; they vary according to the intensity of events on a particular day, and each category has its own dynamic, as reflected in Chart 2. In general, all categories reflect the common human reactions that a participant could observe on site and verbally in communal discussions about events as they occurred on a particular day. In this regard, the Facebook posts are closely related to oral communication.

Chart 2 has also markers of the key events in this period: the first escalation; the newly adopted – on January 16, 2014 – laws coming into force that allowed protestors' imprisonment; the first deaths among the protestors; escalations in the regions; the second escalation of violence; Yanukovych's escape; and Yanukovych's press conference in Russia.

Chart 3 shows the frequency of each of 16 topics mentioned in the posts. The topics had to be consistent at least for several days, but usually weeks, in order to trace their dynamic during the period.

The topics generally reflect the two main opposing forces in the perceptions of the Facebook authors in my corpus, and I will consider this opposition later as two opposing sides and/or provide additional nuances about the confrontations. This approach assisted me in sorting out the collected materials for qualitative analysis.

In this paper, I review a subcategory *Juxtaposition with other historical events* that is within the category *Reflections*, and one selected topic: *Dead on the Maidan*. The aim is to trace the formation of narratives about the *Heavenly Hundred*, a collective name given to all people who died on the Maidan, as a historical event, forms of its memorialization, and reassessment of particular historical periods that contributed to the new narrative. I would like to outline details included in the formative narrative with examples of personal stories, traditional songs and memorial rites, and the contribution of symbols popularized through commercial culture and adopted by the high culture.

Chart 4 provides an illustration of juxtaposition between particular days of intense escalation on Kyiv's streets and the dynamic *Dead on the Maidan* topic on Facebook. There is a particular pattern; it has one peak after the first escalation and first deaths on the Maidan, but after some oscillation during the peaceful period, it fades at the time of the second escalation on February 18. During this more peaceful period, an active search took

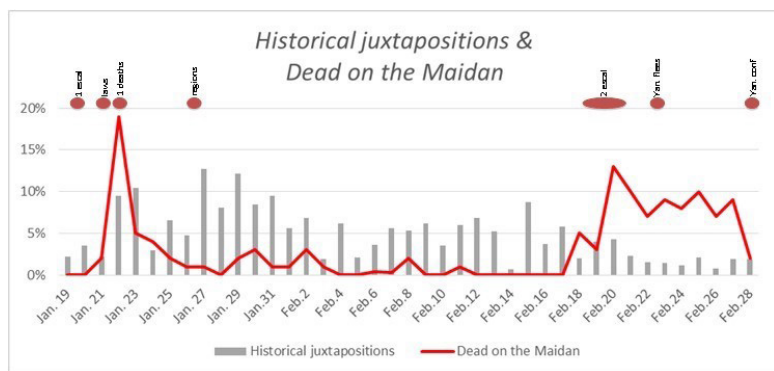


Chart 4. Historical juxtapositions (subset of the Reflection category) and the topic of Dead on the Maidan

place for a wider historical background and interpretation of the protests in historical context. The search for a larger metanarrative begins immediately on the first day of casualties and continues fairly consistently for many days. At that moment, a collective name for the dead protestors was invented (*Heavenly Hundred*) which incorporated symbols from several periods in the history of Ukraine. After the second escalation the dead protestors already had their collective name in addition to their personal stories.

Many of Facebook authors in my collection at the time exhibited the characteristic elements of the “liminal phase” described by Victor Turner (1969). This spontaneous group placed participants on an equal footing instead of a typical hierarchy with the privileges, norms and prohibitions intrinsic to social structure. It creatively combined cultural elements from diverse sources, including instances of high (or official) and popular (or commercial) culture. The newly formed group of protest supporters were in need of discussion of their values and facilitated these liminal-state negotiations with humorous and expressive devices common to this stage of a rite of passage.

Many authors in my collection provide references to historical events of the past in their reflections, trying to develop a narrative and a “language” of explanation or definition and contextualization of the Ukrainian protests to observers outside of Ukraine. There is a Facebook post which is an example of this formulation:

Constantin Sigov, February 27, 2014

...It is apparent that when we want to tell European readers about the

Kyiv revolution, which has no direct analogy in world history, it is worth starting with an example of some significant event or person they do know. Then we can explain the differences. That means we have to really know well the cultural aspects of historical events in different countries. It is very important to explain two significant points to Europeans: the particularity of the Kyiv events and their connections with European liberation movements.

This post explains the need of a new historically rooted narrative to give a value to the experience of the participants and to build connections and a dialogue with outsiders of the event through their value system and their language with acculturated meanings.

Cultural Trauma Viewed through Selected Historical Events

Aarelaid-Tart states that a society needs to re-evaluate the past and re-plan the future in the case of cultural trauma that usually accompanies “sharp, unexpected and deep social change (revolutions, annexations, reigns of terror, massacres, but also rapid economic recession, famine, etc.), causing irregularities in common mnemonic practice.” After this type of events, especially those caused by politics, “the whole society or at least some groups can no longer remember the past as it used to be remembered and a new way of thinking about the past must be invented.” He states that cultural trauma produces at least two, and often more, competing modes of remembering: “the mode of the former (political) regime, and the mode the subject is required to use to remember under the changed circumstances. Usually one of these ways is publicly forbidden or restricted, and another is preferred and favoured” (Aarelaid-Tart 2009: 201). However, these competing narratives coexist in society emphasizing different aspects with the aim “to transform the past in a usable form” (2009: 220). Several more studies suggest a 20-30 year re-assessment cycle for commemoration of the past. In the case of traumatic events, active public discourse about the events influences the formation of memory (Pennebaker and Banasik 1997; Igartua and Paez 1997). The Ukrainian protests fit this cycle, as Ukraine got its independence in 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet regime. In this case, a re-assessment cycle (1991-2014) was intensified by drastic political events.

A human need to articulate and to narrate a new experience leads to a search of already known explanations and symbols, and one of these sources is history. It seems that people were trying to assess the significance of the event in comparison with the past and through known events with

symbolic meaning. One Facebook author reflects on this tendency to apply meanings of past events to the present.

Volodymyr Yermolenko, February 8, 2014

It seems that all this has already happened in historical times, there are some strict laws, and history repeats itself, thus the key to the future must be sought in the past. It is an illusion, and history surprises us just when we think we know all about it.

The importance of the present events for the participants is evident but they felt the need for historical contextualization.

The historical references mentioned in the subcategory *Juxtaposition with other historical events* include a long list of references to different events from ancient to modern history. They address the following periods:

Ancient History: 38 references; Middle Ages: 18 references; Zaporizhzhia Sich and Cossacks: 14 references; 18th-19th centuries: 12 references; 20th century: early years and WWI – 33 references; the 1930s in Europe – 38 references; WWII – 82 times; post-WWI political unrests and conflicts worldwide until the 1990s – 78 references (including those related to the Soviet Union: 55), the 1990s political unrests and conflicts worldwide (all but 1 in Europe) – 34 references; Olympic Games and political tension: 3 references (Berlin 1936, Moscow 1980, and Sarajevo 1984); 21st century wars and conflicts: 32 references; Colour Revolutions and civic movements worldwide: 8 references; History of modern Ukraine (1991-2013): 17 references.

This wide variety of juxtapositions suggests a search for an interpretative narrative for the contemporary event, as a construction of the present through the past.

Borys Khersonkiy, February 23, 2014

We write a chapter in the history of modern times.
Over time, this will become a page, later – a paragraph or two.
A student answering his lesson would hardly remember any date or name,
A total mess is in his head, like roach in a river.

Just remember shooting, explosions, fires at night,
shouting “Glory!,” dead bodies; it is terrible to watch.
The teacher will tell him: sit down and learn!
The page number is 146, the top third of the page.

[Rhythmical in Russian]

Andrij Bondar, February 21, 2014

It's not simply a revolution, friends. It's some crazy digest in the history of humanity. It embraces all possible events: 300 Spartans, and Sich,⁷ and the Hussite wars, and Makhnovshchyna,⁸ and UPA,⁹ and the Russian Revolution of 1905, and the Kholodny Iar,¹⁰ and God knows what else. It seems tomorrow opens a new page: the war of the Democratic North with the enslaved South in the USA.

It's just something unique. All crammed madly together.

Thus, Facebook authors in my collection also trace a number of various historical references and make assumptions on their meaning. I suggest looking more closely at several selected historical events. The most popular of the aforementioned historical periods is World War II. I will focus on this period in this paper while also referring to two more: the Ukrainian national struggles of the early 20th century and Zaporizhian Sich, a semi-autonomous Cossack polity in the 16th-18th centuries. The word "sotnia," the names of the Maidan self-defence units and also the collective name of the dead on the Maidan, *Nebesna Sotnia* (*Heavenly Hundred*), refer to both the early 20th century and Cossack periods. The word "sotnia," literally "hundred" in Ukrainian, refers to a military unit in the Cossack Sich and the Ukrainian People's Army 1917-1920 (Онацький 1957: 1811; Словник української мови 1978: 472; Українська радянська енциклопедія 1965: 330). Some sociological studies in Kyiv during the protests made reference to the time of the Cossacks, discussing particular phases of the Maidan

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7. The administrative and military centre for the Zaporizhzhia Cossacks in the 16th-18th centuries.
 8. "Makhnovshchyna" is a popular name for the Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army of Ukraine, also known as the Black Army, which acted in the southern and eastern regions of contemporary Ukraine, an anarchist army formed largely of Ukrainian and Crimean peasants and workers under the command of the anarchist Nestor Makhno during the Ukrainian National War, 1918-1921.
 9. UPA is for *Ukrainska Povstanska Armiya*, The Ukrainian Insurgent Army, a Ukrainian nationalist paramilitary and later partisan army that engaged in a series of guerrilla conflicts during World War II against Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and both Underground and Communist Poland.
 10. The Kholodny-Iar Republic (1919–1922), a non-recognized state formation at the territory of Ukraine (at that time, Ukrainian National Republic), in Chyhyryn district, Cherkassy region, near a forest ravine, Kholodny Iar. The Republic had its capital in Mel'nyky village and invented the insurgent greeting "Glory to Ukraine!" with the response "Glory to Ukraine!" that later was changed in "Glory to the Heroes!"

and naming them “Maidan-rally, Maidan-camp and Maidan-Sich” (Фонд Демократичні ініціативи імені Ілька Кучеріва 2014). The Cossacks and Ukrainian Insurgent Army of WWII are subjects for discussion about “heroic masculinity” in the context of ideological discourse of the Ukrainian nationalist party *Svoboda* (*Freedom*, that holds 1.3% in the Parliament of Ukraine) in the review 2015 of “searching for new heroes” (Bureychak and Petrenko 2015).

I conducted a search for frequent specific words in three categories: *Humor*, *Storytelling* and in the subcategory *Juxtaposition with other historical events* of the category *Reflections*. Two common words stand out for each period: “fascist/fascism” and “Bandera/Banderites” for WWII; “sotnia/sotnyk” (“sotnyk” is the commander of a military unit) and “cossack” are for the Cossacks’ Sich and the Ukrainian National Republic period. These selected words showed significant frequency: “fascist” – 126 times, “Bandera/Banderits” – 86 times, “sotnia/sotnyk” – 121 times (including “Nebesna Sotnia” – 38 times), and “Cossack” – 29 times.

The most frequently referenced historical period is World War II; the most relevant periods to the words used in the collective name, the Nebesna Sotnia, are the Cossack Sich and the Ukrainian National Republic. I will review each of them in connection with collected Facebook narratives and the relevance of each period to the protests on the Maidan.

WWII Discourse

The word “fascist” was used by both sides. Protestors used it to name the pro-government side, the unacceptable actions of the riot police, arrests and persecutions of civilians, *titushky*¹¹ actions, and more. When the pro-government side began using “fascist” to name the protesters and the Maidan supporters, the latter also used this word with irony and sarcasm as evident in an example below. Most instances of the words “fascist” and “fascism” among my Facebook posts are depictions of “them” or “them about us.”

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11. *Titushky* – is the collective name of street hooligans whose purpose was to perform illegal acts such as beating, carjacking, and kidnapping; they were under the protection of riot police and authorities. They got the name after Vadym Titushko, who, together with two other men, had attacked journalists of the 5th TV Channel on May 18, 2013. (During the protests, Vadym Titushko declared his anti-government position and supported the Maidan.) The name also refers to the word “tushky” [literally “trunks”] used in reference to parliamentarians who changed their Party affiliation for money.

Oleksandr Zinchenko, January 22, 2014

I'm as curious as a historian about the starting point of German fascism and the people's feelings at that time. Now I know that for sure.

Anonymous, February 2, 2014

In simple words, the situation is now as follows: 1. The multitudinous Maidan stands against Yanukovych. 2. The Anti-Maidan stands against fascism. As far as I see these two lines aren't crossed in any way. These are just two absolutely non-intersecting stories. The Maidan has to organize a serious anti-fascist meeting in order for these two subject lines to meet. Then a logical association will take place. I don't know what the Anti-Maidan will stand for after that. Maybe, against Coca-Cola, or against animal abuse...

The media, mostly pro-Russian, and Russian media outlets used the word "fascist(s)" during the active phase of the Maidan and later during the invasion of Crimea and acts of war in the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk; this phenomenon was widely discussed. Egor Lapshov examines the symbolic language of Russian governmental media as it pertains to the discussion of conflict in terms of WWII with the aim of involving the audience on a high emotional level. He suggests the terminology prevents the audience from feeling distant and engages them in the "sacred war for liberation" as they view themselves "from the pages of the historical textbook with a clear distinction between good and evil" (Лапшов 2014). Lapshov outlines that no clear articulation or contextualization of the "fascists" image was provided in Russian media, neither any distinction between an image of Ukraine and the West. Alexei Kamenskikh in his research of historical trauma suggests that the Russian media managed to convince their audience that Ukrainians are those "fascists" of WWII time, and that was the ground for both the Crimea annexation and Donbass conflict (Каменских 2017). Sergey Chapnin, former Editor-in-chief of the "Journal of the Moscow Patriarchy" of the Russian Orthodox Church from 2009-2015, states that memory of WWII in Russia turned into a significant nationwide myth of today Russian identity supported both by the government and the Church (Чапнин 2018).

Memory of WWII in Ukraine has several ways of interpretation, where the pro-government side shares the Russian vision, but the pro-Maidan side has a more complex-layered view. I suggest that those Facebook authors in my collection used the word "fascist" as a synonym of their highly negative attitude towards the pro-government side and their actions

as well. Some authors provide descriptions of historical facts of WWII inviting their readers to interpret and to juxtapose with current events. However, I intend to focus on the important period, in general, and the authors' interpretation of memory. One of my Facebook collection authors reflects upon the former government of Ukraine and the perception of the West by Russian government media outlets as presented through WWII terminology. In this view, the Maidan participants are the representatives of Western images interpreted through WWII symbols. This Facebook post is outside my specific corpus, because it was written later than the defined timeframe, but is still relevant to the topic.

Volodymyr Yermolenko, March 22, 2015

Why do they so easily call us fascists? Why did they so easily call Balts fascists in 1989-1990¹², Moldovans in 1991-92,¹³ and Georgians in 2003-2008?¹⁴

I found the answer in [the book by] Vladimir Bukovsky *And the Wind Returns...*¹⁵ It is among the best texts about the mechanisms of life in Soviet regime camps, the KGB functionaries' way of thinking, causes and mechanisms of Soviet regime atrocity, etc.¹⁶

There is an episode. Prisoners included political and ordinary criminal detainees. Sometimes they managed to fight [against the regime] on common ground. But initially criminals and killers were very hostile towards political prisoners/dissidents. Why? Because the criminals, as

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12. In 1989-1990 Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia seceded from the Soviet Union.
 13. In late 1990-1992 the Transnistria conflict broke out between pro-Transnistria forces, including the Transnistrian Republican Guard, militia and Cossack units, and supported by elements of the Russian Army and pro-Moldovan forces, including Moldovan troops and police.
 14. The protests in Georgia over the disputed parliamentary elections in November 2003, called The Rose Revolution, forced the president of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, to resign. In August 2008 the Russian-Georgian war took place.
 15. The book had first Soviet serialization in the periodical *Teatr*, Moscow, 1987-1988; published in book form in the USSR in 1990. Vladimir Bukovsky, a writer and a neurophysiologist, was a leading member of the Soviet dissident movement of the 1960s and 1970s. He was arrested and imprisoned four times for political reasons: 1963, 1965, 1967, and 1971. In 1976, Bukovsky was deported from the USSR in exchange for Luis Corvalán, the general secretary of the Communist Party of Chile, imprisoned in 1973 by Augusto Pinochet. The USSR provided asylum for Corvalán. In 2007, Bukovsky was nominated as a candidate for the presidency of Russia in elections of 2008, but the Central Electoral Committee did not register his candidature. Currently Vladimir Bukovsky resides in UK.
 16. The KGB is for *Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti*, in English the Committee for State Security, the main security agency for the Soviet Union from 1954 until its break-up in 1991.

Bukovsky says, called the dissidents ... "fascists."

But how could rude, aggressive and cruel criminals call subtle intellectuals and dissidents fascists? How is it possible?

I think the answer is simple. They consider "fascism" EVERYTHING THAT COMES FROM THE WEST. Absolutely everything. This is because everything they know about the Western world is solely through WWII stories. The most liberal European who promotes tolerance and invites you to dinner at a restaurant is a fascist, because he is "from there." I once proposed creating a dictionary of "Putinism," because "Putinism" never uses words in their original meaning. They say "federalisation" for annexation, or "the right of people for self-determination" means imperial aggression, etc.

So, for "Putinism" fascism means liberalism.

In discussing the meaning of the memory of WWII, Aleksei Bratochkin focuses on liberal, communist and fascist ideologies as the most influential structures before and during the war. He suggests the victory of liberalism and communism over fascism was interpreted in a moral context as the victory of "good" and "civilization" over "evil" and "barbarism," and they became the essential symbolic resources for collective identity construction in the countries of the Allies. Not all post-Soviet countries went through critical re-assessment of WWII events and their symbolic meanings. Bratochkin states that the memory of WWII in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia after 1991 was used mostly for ideological purposes, while work in archives, academic research, publications and conferences appeared much more slowly (Браточкин 2015). Michel Bouchard, comparing the context and discourses constructed in Canadian and Russian museums, concludes that narratives in Russian museums and WWII memorials are highly politicized and "can be used to legitimate political and military actions" (Bouchard 2012).

Following the Maidan protests, during the Crimea invasion, and with escalation of the tension in the east of Ukraine, the revival and re-assessment of WWII memories have been employed in Ukraine all the way up to official levels; this continues to this day. In 2015, May 8 was officially designated Memory and Reconciliation Day according to the Western tradition, shifting the focus away from Victory Day celebrated on May 9 according to the Soviet tradition (Еспресо.TV 2015a). The new laws about de-communization, which evoke public discourse, change of visual symbols, the name and the date of official memorial ceremonies of the end of WWII, are all instances of the memory-reassessment process taking place (Червоненко 2015). That is, the protests initiated the re-assessment process

and the formation of a new perception of the historical period different from the Soviet-style narrative, which had implied a negative attitude to the West and positive to the communist past of the country. The new narratives and symbols were widely discussed and institutionalized quickly.

The words “Bandera and Banderite(s)” are examples of the reflected narrative of “what they say about us.” Stepan Bandera is one of the best known figures of the nationalist struggle in Western Ukraine during WWII. There are many facts and myths about the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the nationalists’ confrontation and cooperation with both the communist and fascist regimes, as well as with the military forces of neighbouring Czechoslovakia and Poland. In this context, Stepan Bandera is one of the most controversial figures, associated with more myths than facts about that time in general and his person in particular (Narvselius 2012; Struve 2014). The term “Banderite(s)” was created based on his last name. Anti-Maidan supporters used this name, as a rule, for negative connotations to identify threats they expected from the pro-Maidan side. The Maidan’s supporters use the word for their ironic and sarcastic feedback, as an example below illustrates.

Alexander Babich, January 27, 2014

I am a fascist! I support the Maidan in all possible ways!!!

Also I am a “Banderite,” “a stupid and non-educated moron,” “an American paid agent fiercely hating all things Russian,” “a nationalist and someone from the extreme West of Ukraine,” “a drugged teen,” “an idiot, not understanding the situation,” “a soccer ultra who wants to avenge the cops”... Just because I SUPPORT THE MAIDAN!!!!

I am a fascist! Both my grandfathers took part in that war [WWII] from its first day to the last. My friends and I, on our own expenses, have already for many years been searching over fields, collecting and reburying the remains of our soldiers. But I support the Maidan – so, I am a fascist!

I am a Banderite! As a historian, I write historical books about Soviet underground in catacombs. All copies are distributed to veterans’ organizations, museums and school libraries of Odessa. But I support the Maidan – so, I am a Banderite!

I am a stupid and non-educated moron! I have four university degrees, but I support the Maidan – so, I am the stupid moron!

I am an American paid agent fiercely hating all things Russian! That’s why I was the scriptwriter of the 500-serial historical project “History of the Russian State,” recommended as a study aid to the students of Russian schools; as well as other historical movies for the Russian TV. Now I have my own tourist agency in Odessa, and 80% of my guests are Russians. But I am an American paid agent and I hate all things Russian,

because I support the Maidan!

I am a nationalist and someone from the extreme West of Ukraine. I was born in the Mykolaiv region, I live in Odessa; I speak better Russian than Ukrainian. I am a fan of the Donetsk “Shakhtar” [soccer team]. I know Pushkin¹⁷ better than [Taras] Shevchenko¹⁸ (that is my shame). I like to climb the Crimean Mountains, to walk on Podil [in Kyiv] and Bursatsky descent [in Kharkiv], but I consider the Kamchatka Peninsula [which is in Russia] to be the most beautiful place on Earth. But I am a nationalist and someone from the extreme West of Ukraine, because I support the Maidan!

I am “a drugged teen,” “an idiot, not understanding the situation,” “a soccer ultra who wants to avenge cops.” I am 43 years old, and I have never smoked a cigarette. My unfinished Ph.D. was to be focused on political science (particularly, on the probability of neo-fascist groups development in the post-Soviet countries). I attend a stadium once a year, and have the pleasure to talk to my colleagues – cops (and not only there).

But I support the Maidan, so I am a Jewish Fascist, a “Banderite” ultra of “Shakhtar”¹⁹ and an agent of Moscow who, being paid by the USA, wants to turn Ukraine into a colony of Germany!

(Old ladies from Luhansk region and Krivorizhzhia “titushky,” you won’t read this nonsense, alas! Also you won’t understand that (very trivial sarcasm, as I suppose). This post is addressed to Russians and my peers from the East and the South of Ukraine who are still having their eyes blinkered, and think that all participants of the Maidan are..... (see the list above).

They are the best people of this country. Those who sincerely love it. Those who have enough intellect not to blame Russia for all our troubles (because Russia has not dealt with its own yet). Those who are tired of calculating the number of loans taken from the West, and how long our great-grandchildren will have to pay them back. Those who are able to act, to run a business and to take responsibility. Those who want to live

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17. Alexander Pushkin, 1799-1837, a Russian writer of the Romantic era, known as a founder of modern Russian literature.
 18. Taras Shevchenko (born March 9, 1814 in Cherkasy region, Ukraine, died March 10, 1861 in St. Petersburg, the Russian Empire), a main figure of Ukrainian literature, taught in school and University programs. In 2012, during his visit to Kaniv, Cherkassy region, the place of Shevchenko’s grave, Yanukovych suggested the announcement of 2014 as Taras Shevchenko Year. At an early stage of the protests, Victor Yanukovych and Vladimir Putin signed a number of documents, including an agreement for the official Ukrainian-Russian celebration of the 200th anniversary of Taras Shevchenko’s birth, scheduled on March 9, 2014. In mid-February 2014, Yanukovych made the suggestion to celebrate Taras Shevchenko’s anniversary as a Day of National Reconciliation. However, during the subsequent confrontation, Shevchenko became a symbol of the protest.
 19. “Shakhtar” is a Ukrainian soccer team.

in free, clean and happy Ukraine: Ukraine without bandits, titushky, oligarchs, “American spies,” the EU consultants, the Russian lying media and all the other stuff...

We simply want to have a happy life in our UKRAINE!

Stepan Bandera’s popular image includes features of right-wing nationalism intolerant to other ethnicities including anti-Semitism. Emphasizing its misinterpretation in current events and parodying other types of anti-Semitic stereotypes, protestors use the word “Jew-Banderites” (“zhydo-banderivtsi”) in the category “what they say about us” to underline it mutually as an oxymoron. They refer to this word in the context of the oft-repeated concern about ethnic confrontation on the Maidan in some national and international media, and popular images of an “enemy” typical of the Anti-Maidan side.

Valeriy Pekar, February 1, 2014

The word “Jew-Banderites” became a part of titushky’s vocabulary. This broad group includes the following categories of “aliens”: 1. Everyone residing west of the East [of Ukraine] and due to this fact has been cankered by Europe. 2. Everyone wearing Ukrainian symbols and betraying all ideals their grandfathers had fought for.²⁰ 3. Everyone who has studied something and in this way revealed one’s alien [social] class nature. 4. Barnacled. They are evidently too smart, so they are not ours. 5. Ukrainian-speaking [people]. It is evident. 6. Kyivans. Well, they are just not ours, somehow not ours, I know that instinctively. 7. Jews. It’s all clear. 8. Cyclists.

Vadym Ilkov, January 25, 2014

“We have a Sambir sotnia,²¹ “Afghan” [war veterans] sotnia,²² “Vidsich” sotnia.²³ There is Gandhi’s sotnia (followers of the father of non-violent resistance – Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi) that protects civilians.” How can we explain that to you, our European friends, that we have a Gandhi’s sotnia? That we have priests, ultras [soccer fans], students, Cossacks, Afghans, left-wing-radicals, poets, alpinists, Buddhists, Hutsuls,²⁴ Crimean Tatars – and they are all together! But you ask about the percentage of the right [wing groups] participating in the protests...(

20. That is the referral to the Soviet-style narrative about the World War II.

21. Sambir is a town in Lviv region.

22. Veterans of the Soviet-Afghan war 1979-1989.

23. “Vidsich” is an active Ukrainian civic movement created in 2010 as a reaction to the policies of Victor Yanukovych and pro-Russian tendencies connected with his presidential administration.

24. An ethnic group settled in the Carpathian Mountains.

As a result, the issue of ethnicities evoked numerous discussions on Facebook during the protests. Some authors claimed that media preoccupation with the issues of nationalist ideologies and potential ethnic confrontation was misguided²⁵ in ignoring other participants of the protests as in the example below.

Sotnias, the Cossacks and the Ukrainian National Republic

“Sotnia” literally means “a hundred” in Ukrainian. The Maidan protestors organized themselves into “sotni” for self-defense purposes after confrontations with the riot police had started, but prior to the governmental use of firearms. The self-defense structure includes several dozen sotnias. Every group uses “sotnia” to describe their unit where the first word of the unit name can be the group members’ place of origin, their field of occupation, an ethnic minority group’s name, etc. The well-known *Right Sector* group grew out of the 23rd sotnia of the Maidan. For the purposes of coordination, the number of members in each group was about a hundred: although the number could vary, it should include at least several dozen. The leader of the group, called the “sotnyk” (or centurion²⁶), must know all members of his unit and be able to get in contact with them when necessary. This type of organization makes reference to the Cossack army of the 16th-18th centuries as an administrative, territorial and military unit. In Cossack times, a unit was usually named after the locality where its administration was situated. The “sotnyk” was either elected or appointed by the “Hetman,” or by a “colonel.” “Hetman” was a political title, assigned to military commanders, as the second-highest rank after the monarch in the 15th-18th centuries. “Sotnyk” occupied the third rank of power, after a “colonel” and the “Hetman.” “Sotnias” were officially eliminated in 1783 after the Russian Empire’s type of territorial administration was instituted on Ukrainian territory. Infantry and cavalry units of the Ukrainian National Republic army in 1917-1920 were also called “sotnias.”

Thus, the self-defense structure and its naming symbolically identifies

25. The nationalist groups were marginal on the Maidan and after it was over. At the extraordinary 2014 presidential campaign in Ukraine, the leaders of nationalist parties *Right Sector* and *Svoboda*, Dmytro Iarosh and Oleh Tiahnybok, got 0.7% and 1.16% respectively. Central Election Committee of Ukraine. Extraordinary presidential campaign in Ukraine, May 25, 2014. Retrieved August 8, 2015. <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/vp2014/wp300pt001f01=702.html>
26. “Centurion” is a synonym in meaning to the word “sotnyk”; but the word had no similar wide usage on the Maidan. It refers to Ancient Rome and the Roman army organization with its echoes in the Cossack army.

the Maidan forces both as the Cossack army fighting with the Ottoman Porta, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth²⁷ and Moscow principality, and as the Ukrainian National Republic resisting Russian communists in the early 20th century. It is important to note that no Facebook post in my collection refers to the source of the name. The initiative to name the self-defense structure in this way is anonymous and the first association with these particular historical periods is unclear. Later, when the name became well known, other volunteers helping the permanent “inhabitants” of the Maidan named themselves according to their activity. They may have had no system of coordination, but used the name for a sense of belonging to the whole Maidan structure. These types of virtual units include an “Art Sotnia” of artists, an “Office Sotnia” of volunteers helping with documents and legal issues, a “Kitchen Sotnia” of volunteers providing food to the Maidan, a “Women’s Sotnia” of feminists, etc., and even the ironic “Couch Sotnia” of those not attending the Maidan but commenting on the events through social media.

Alya Shandra, February 15, 2014

Dear English-speaking Revolutionaries!

We invite you to join the YouTubers subgroup²⁸ of our EuromaidanPR-sotnia²⁹. Because together we are the strong.

Alex Mochanov, February 24, 2014

CELEBRITIES SOTNIA

It sounds earnest and funny.

I am sure that Celebrities’ sotnia will not have strived for the power.

Tell me, is it true that Sergei Bezrukov³⁰ performed Yulia Tymoshenko

27. However, Facebook authors have many fewer references to Cossack confrontations with the Ottoman Porta and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth but more to their fighting with Moscow principality, likely with respect to the real situation during the protests. Many Crimean Tatars took part in the protests; Poland and Lithuania declared their support of the protestors from the early phase of the Maidan.
28. The author uses the word “desiatka” that literally means “a ten,” the smallest unit of the Cossacks and territorial administration of Kyivan Rus’ since the 10th century. The Cossack subunit included 30-50 members. (Онацький 1957: 334). This subdivision also refers to the word “contubernium,” the smallest unit in the Roman Army that was composed of eight legionaries. Ten “contubernia” were grouped into a “centuria,” and the latter means “a hundred” in Latin.
29. EuromaidanPR is an English language Facebook group created for the purpose of collecting materials about the Maidan and its participants and to provide the data for publication in international media outlets.
30. Sergei Bezrukov is a popular Russian actor. In January 2013 he shared a record about

on the Maidan?

I did not go and did not see. It did not appeal to me.

Apparently, the Maidan participants intentionally used the name for self-representation. Some media used the name Maidan-Sich to define a particular phase of the protests which was already self-organized and had barricades as visual borders on the square. Why were the Cossacks important for self-representations? Serhii Plokyh examines the history of the Cossack age interpreted through a historical treatise of the 19th century called the *History of Rus'*, in which the term Rus' referred to the Ukrainian Cossacks.³¹ He considers how the narrative told the history of the Cossack "in a manner befitting the hopes and expectations of the Romantic age." This text became the most influential source used as a historical myth in the formation of the Ukrainian nation (Plokyh 2012). Serhii Krymsky suggests an ethnos can become a nation when it becomes a subject of history and he considers the Ukrainian nation was formed in the 17th century, "when Cossacks became the main military power and warriors of Europe for defence from the Ottoman invasion" (Кримський 2014). According to Krymsky, national archetypes are essential components for collective memory and national identity construction, and these symbolic structures of mentality can have different interpretations in different epochs. Some media outlets after the Maidan make reference to self-defense structure as a symbol of warriors for the nation having continuity with Cossack times (Рудяченко 2015). Together with that romanticized depiction, some Facebook authors ironically refer to an image of the Cossacks as permanent fighters. The next example implies a suggestion that the protestors need to develop and to coordinate their own views and strategies but not to be preoccupied with the issue of confrontation.

Oleksiy Panych, February 7, 2014

the makeup technique used for his preparation to perform the role of Vladimir Vysotsky, a Soviet dissident musician, poet and actor, in the film by Petr Buslov Vysotsky, *Thank You for Being Alive* ("Высоцкий. Спасибо, что живой"). For a while, the performer of the main role was unknown, and the record caused many jokes about Bezrukov performing the role of politicians in the collisional and top mediated political events.

31. *History of Rus'* is a book about the history of the Rus' people and their state from ancient times up to 1769. The book was written at the end of the 18th century by an anonymous author, and first published in 1846 in Moscow in Russian by Osyp Bodianski. The book focuses, first, on the idea of historical difference and antagonism between Rus' (Ukraine) and Muscovy (Russia); and secondly, it argues the historical continuity of the Rus' people (Ukrainians) from the times of Kyivan Rus', 9th-13th centuries, until the early modern Cossack state.

“...The Cossacks were yawning because of a standstill. The Tatars were also unemployed and had thought about a war with the Cossacks.

Khmelnitsky saw that and finally suggested:

– Chaps, let’s surrender ourselves to some state!

– Hurray! – The Cossacks gaily shouted. – Such golden words.

– Let’s give Ukraine up, and then we will take it back. Having taken it back, we will give it up again; and having given it up, we will take it away again.

– Whom will we join now? – Khmelnitsky asked.³²

After a brief discussion, the Cossacks decided to swear fealty to the Moscow king. The Poles until today had still stayed with Khmelnitsky’s wife.

The Cossacks breathed more freely. Later they breathed not so freely, but more often...”

“The world history finished by *Satyricon*” (1910)³³

That is, the name “sotnia” mostly refers to romantic nationalism and a myth of a heroic past of the Cossacks and continues to the national struggle in modern times, together with self-awareness of the new implementation of the popular myth. Association with the Ukrainian National Republic emphasizes a critical re-assessment of the Soviet past and the communist regime. In addition to the implications of the mentioned historical periods, the protestors’ self-representations gained a new meaning apart from historical heroic myths.

From Individuals to the Heavenly Hundred (Nebesna Sotnia) Narrative

The most tragic week in Kyiv took place in late February 2014 when more than a hundred people were shot dead on the Maidan. They were given the collective name *Nebesna Sotnia* (*Heavenly Hundred*); it became the central memory of the uprising. A hymn, poetry, monuments, memorial

32. Bohdan Khmelnitsky (c. 1595–1657) was the Hetman of the Zaporozhian Host of the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (now part of Ukraine). He led an uprising against the Commonwealth and its magnates (1648–1654) which resulted in the creation of a Cossack state. In 1654, he concluded the Treaty of Pereyaslav with the Tsardom of Russia. Helena Czaplińska, originally Polish, was the second wife of Bohdan Khmelnitsky. Her first marriage with Daniel Czapliński, a deputy head of Chyhyryn, a cavalry officer in the forces of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and a personal foe of Bohdan Khmelnitsky, was registered in the Roman Catholic rite. Helena and Daniel’s formal divorce was not confirmed.

33. See Аверченко 2015. The name *Satyricon* refers to the Russian weekly satirical journal with the same name issued in St. Petersburg from 1908-1914. The journal was named after a Latin work of fiction believed to have been written by Gaius Petronius or Titus Petronius in the 1st century.

plaques and books were produced (Богданович 2014).

The song *Plyve kacha po Tysyni* (*A Duck Swims on Tysyna River*) began to serve as a requiem spontaneously, without long build-up or public discussion. Amongst the first of the people to die, after being shot by a sniper on January 22, was Sergei Zhyznevisky; and *Plyve kacha po Tysyni* was one of his favorite songs. His friends asked for the song to be performed on the central stage on the Maidan during the mass farewell ceremony to the deceased. It is a mournful folk song originating, in different versions, in the far western regions of Trans-Carpathia or Lemkivshchyna (small ethnographic areas in the Carpathian Mountains). According to one version, Vasyl Grendzha-Donsky, a figure of the Ukrainian national struggle in the 1920s, adapted the song to its modern version. Another story claims the song was written in 1939 and first published in 1944 by the Ukrainian composer and folklorist Dezydery Zador (Сокіл 2014; Синяк 2015). A well-known Ukrainian *a cappella* vocal group *Pikkardiyska Tertsia* performed the obscure song, and made it known to a wider public. The group's repertoire focuses on folk songs, liturgical music, world hit songs, and original compositions by group members. The song *Plyve kacha po Tysyni* has been in the group's repertoire since 2002 as a folk song up until the winter of 2014. Prior to the Maidan events the group had performed it only once at a funeral ceremony, that of a Polish *Solidarność* member. The group members have remarked that since the song has been performed so often for people shot on the Maidan, it can no longer be perceived in the same way, but has built a strong connection with the most tragic parts of the Maidan. It has come to be considered as the requiem for the *Nebesna Sotnia*. Now the group will rarely perform the song at a regular concert unless by special request (Нудик 2014). The song has gained a new meaning, starting as a folk song of a small ethnographic area through performance by a commercial cultural group during dramatic events at a state level, and rising to high culture as it gained national importance.

Volodymyr Viatrovych, February 24, 2014

Again a coffin with a deceased Hero at the Maidan. And *Plyve kacha po Tysyni* is on again. I loved this song. Now I hate it with each new performance [during the mass farewell at the Maidan].

The places of confrontation and the places of origin of the deceased in the *Nebesna Sotnia* now have memorial plaques and monuments dedicated to these individuals.³⁴ There is a new state award called the Heroes of

34. See *Новости Армении* – Терт.am 2014; *Korrespondent.net* 2014; Кушнірук and Токарська 2014; Борис 2015.

Nebesna Sotnia Order.³⁵ In 2015, February 20 was fixed as a national memorial day for the deceased on the Maidan.³⁶ After public discussion, the location of the shootings in Kyiv, a part of Institute Street, was renamed for the Heroes of Nebesna Sotnia Street.³⁷

Alex Mochanov, February 22, 2014

The dead on the Maidan were called Nebesna Sotnia.

[...] proposed to rename Institute [Street] that starts on the Maidan, in Nebesna Sotnia Street.

And to put the [names of] Nebesna Sotnia Avenue on it. [To make] stars in the asphalt.

Or snowflakes as memory about this winter...

And officially celebrate February 18 as National Defender Day.

I am for that with both hands. Join. Vote.

The Nebesna Sotnia deserves that. And still does during life...

Oleksiy Panych, February 23, 2014

"#ЄвроМайдан This morning we have received more and more messages proposing to rename Institute Street to Nebesna Sotnia Street. What do you think about that?"

I support it.

Apart from and prior to official acts in memory of the deceased, many informal memorials and non-official plaques with the newly proposed street name were put up at *Institute Street*. It has been closed to road traffic since the first barricade was erected. Many tributes appeared immediately after the events and looked very similar to those usually placed by relatives, according to folk tradition, near roads or other public places following an accidental death. Svitlana Kukharenska discusses abnormal death memorials in Ukraine as objects both of material culture and folk beliefs, a century-long tradition of marking spots of "bad death" (Kukharenska 2010). Later, more permanent memorials in stone replaced the temporary ones (Figures 1 and 2). These more permanent memorials were not limited to a particular place; the hometowns of the deceased also mounted memorial plaques, erected monuments and renamed streets in memory to these individuals.³⁸

Since Ukraine has no contemporary tradition of urban public funeral ceremonies, the memorial services to the fallen employed traditional funeral

35. See Еспресо.TV 2014.

36. See Еспресо.TV 2015b.

37. See 5 канал 2014.

38. See Україна Online 2014; Телеканал "Рівне 1" 2014. For late November 2015, Ukraine had 42 streets and squares renamed in memory of the *Nebesna Sotnia* or *Maidan Heroes* in different regions.



Figure 1. Memorial items to Nebesna Sotnia in Kyiv on the Maidan and former Institute Street, June-August 2014. Photo by the author.



Figure 2. Memorial items to Nebesna Sotnia in Kyiv on the Maidan and former Institute Street, June-August 2014. Photo by the author.

and memorial rites usually reserved for private use. Milena Milenina in her research on oral narratives about the *Nebesna Sotnia* documents a spontaneous memorialization and large number of oral stories typical of traditional funeral rites such as biographical narratives about the deceased during the funeral dinner and attending a cemetery (Міленіна 2014).

My collection includes a large sampling of narratives about the deceased. The deceased are identified both in the collective name of the *Nebesna Sotnia*, and personally as particular individuals. For example, the next text describes the erection of a monument at the place of a tent burned on February 18, 2014. It provides context and character to the memorial, both giving honour to the deceased as heroes and referring to them in intimate manner as to “sons” and “brothers” in the picture. At the same time, it provides the details of the funeral rites, which were adapted and accommodated to the circumstances. The text below illustrates how many people were willing to come and place a stone at the base of the monument. At a traditional burial ceremony, participants throw a handful of earth into the grave before it is completely covered.

Volodymyr Kukhar, February 26, 2014

On their own initiative, people are now building a monument to the dead.

[It is] at Khreschatyk Metro [station] at the location of a tent that was burned down by Berkuts on February 18.

The monument is signed: a Kyivan

There is a line of people willing to put their cobblestones at the base [of the monument].

Glory to the Heroes! – Maidan Nezalezhnosti

In personal narratives, authors describe witnessing the death of people they knew personally and participation in the funeral preparation together with their family members.

Borys Filatov, January 25, 2014

Tonight at 3.30 am Seryozha Nigoyan³⁹ finally arrived home from the Maidan. Dead. [His] funeral was announced for tomorrow at 12.00 pm. Now [I want to speak] about simple, but, nevertheless, incredible [things]. Do you know the first words of his mother to people who brought Seryozha? No, not “What did you bastards do!” She said from

39. The first person shot dead on the Maidan, Sergei Nigoyan, Armenian background, lived in Dnipro region, Ukraine. “Seryozha” is an intimate form of the name “Sergei”; the latter is more formal.

the doorway: “[People] on the Maidan have to hold on. My son died for all Ukraine.” I cannot describe my feelings about what is going on.... We all write the History of the Nation...

Alla Waysband, February 24, 2014

“We were simply standing on Institute [Street], hurting no one, when a shot sounded! – I turned around and Sasha had already fallen down(... a bullet had gone into his heart, but he was still alive... Medics quickly came to us and together, having pulled Sashko aside, we examined him. Unfortunately, their verdict was irrevocable – medics said he had no chance of survival and they could not do anything, as the bullet had hit him right in his heart (((...

Sasha heard that, these were the last seconds of his life ...[...]

Do you know what the most terrible thing was then!? *His* last words that I will remember for my whole life!!!

Sashko said: If only you knew how much I want to live!!!!.... how much I want to live. That's it... after these words he closed his eyes... closed forever...

I cried... no! – I did not cry, I sobbed...”

There are many posts revealing personal relations and intimate feelings about the deceased and acquaintance with their family members in more detail. The next example also provides the context where the song *Plyve kacha po Tysyni* is already known in connection with the fallen on the Maidan, and newly created public memorial ceremony is accepted.

Anonymous, February 24, 2014

[...] Lyudmila Ivanovna is an old, short, thin and very modestly dressed woman. She doesn't cry at all. She only worries that Vanya's forelock is nicely combed in the morgue. She asks if that song “about a duck” will be at the Maidan. And if the Maidan will disperse now? I link my arm through hers and I say “no, it won't disperse now.” She smiles, nestles to me and says: “my God, your hands are so cold.” She doesn't cry at all. Neither at the morgue, nor on the Maidan or at the stage reading in Ukrainian the verse she had read to Vanya by phone when he went to the Maidan. [...]

Biographical details of the lives of the dead protestors also provided information about their occupation, social and ethnic background aimed at illustrating the truth of ethnic, social and cultural diversity of the Maidan supporters.

Anonymous, February 19, 2014

There will be no more paintings on water ... Vinnytsia media reported that last night Zhmerinka artist Valery Brezdeniuk was killed at the Maidan. He was a unique artist – he worked in paper marbling technique (paintings on water). Valery required only a bit of clear water, paints, and a bit of imagination to create a masterpiece; then in few minutes the water blossomed with flowers, fantastic birds soared, an underwater world shone and lush forests made their sounds... RIP

Anonymous, February 20, 2014

A farmer passed away...

He did not take bribes, nor sell drugs, nor did he steal money from the [state] budget.

He grew grain and kept cows. By definition in our state – he is a terrorist. Sashko, ask the Lord whether there is punishment for beasts.

I shall meet you not with backpack and in *vyshyvanka* embroidered shirt⁴⁰ on *Chumaks' Ways*⁴¹. Bright memory to you, a farmer.

At the time of the first escalation in January 2014, all narratives about dead people were personalized; also, they gave the people respect and treated them as heroes. However, these narratives did not provide a specific collective name for the dead, just particular biographical facts on each person. The features of memorialization were subsequent to the context already created on the Maidan. In February 18-20, when the number of dead grew rapidly to almost a hundred and created difficulties in remembering all their names, the name of the *Nebesna Sotnia* appeared, based on frequent use and popularity of the word “sotnia” among the Maidan supporters implying the sense of belonging to the Maidan structure.

Alex Sigov, February 21, 2014

Do they believe that we will quietly disperse and wait for December?⁴²

That we will lower our eyes in front of one another and try to hush up any awkward talk about a hundred dead? They will wait in vain.

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40. “Vyshyvanka” is a traditional Ukrainian embroidered shirt, one among well-known Ukrainian symbols represented in material culture.
 41. Chumaks’ Way is the name of the trade and transport system of Ukrainian traders (chumaky) of the 16th-19th centuries that carried salt from Crimea to Ukraine and Ukrainian agriculture products – to Crimea. The way leads through the left bank of Dnipro River, Zaporizhzhia steppe and the Isthmus of Perekop. It is also a Ukrainian synonym for Milky Way. According to folk legends, chumaks used the light of Milky Way at night for their navigation.
 42. According to the agreement signed February 21, 2014, right before Yanukovych fled the country, the extraordinary presidential elections were set for December 2014.

Today I gave a Lvivian a ride to the morgue. A sniper had killed his friend, the twenty-nine-year-old faculty member of the Ukrainian Catholic University. This is my age and my field of occupation. It is my reality, and it has no space for Yanukovich.

Another author focused more on the military officer's point of view and interpretation of the protestors' behavior in the line of fire during the most dramatic days.

Anonymous, February 26, 2014

You know, for the professional military community, all this self-defence of children and [office] managers in motorcycle helmets is, how to put it... ridiculous.

Any serious person, except for a few, wouldn't sit out in a tent at the Maidan, dealing with all these watching and marching. It is unacceptable. Not to mention that work with a stick in a helmet, it is not *comme il faut*. Not to mention that serious people have serious affairs, which you won't give up; it is a responsibility, you know.

In general, it was ridiculous for this community. Till February 18th. The beatings in Mariinsky [park] and night attacks erased smiles from their faces.

Since the morning of [February] 19th I have received messages. At first Israelis (the people that experienced the Lebanese wars, the intifada, special operations):

– Foolish kids, – where do they climb?! Have they finished with their computer games?

After a while, British:

– What fool gave them such an order?! With wooden boards against sniper rifles and machine guns?

Here I found an answer:

– Look at their movement. It is clear that they are volunteers, but not those who follow orders.

– Yes, really...

Then later:

– Why do they do that? It is absurd, nonsense, illogical.

I also didn't understand - what for?.

And then – I understood:

– They draw the fire off onto themselves – away from women, doctors, old people, and civilians at the Maidan.

– At such a price?!

– Yes, at such a price.

After that, silence came.

I was told quietly from that side that these “ridiculous boys” who went forward again and again, having seen the same group shot, caused even those shooting them to shudder.

Really, we cannot imagine what waited for all of us at the end if the Maidan, both dead and alive, would tremble and run away that day. Then wild crowds of Berkutnia [*Berkuts* riot police] and titushky would go around the city killing, plundering, and raping; and the country would be in chaos for a long time, which would make Belarus and Russia – seem a kindergarten.

And those, escaped and lost, stopped by themselves a terrible swirling hole, broke off both Putin's and the devil's plans.

Here is such a dilemma: damn nonsense from the military point of view and – great valor of conscience, a Spiritual victory. Great [victory].

By the end of February 2014, after Yanukovych had fled the country, the confrontation in Kyiv ended, and at that moment the killing of protestors became recognized as the most tragic event in Ukraine since its independence in 1991. The escape of Yanukovych and a number of top officials from Ukraine at that moment meant the end of dramatic fighting and the victory of the confrontations. This gave even more appreciation to the people who died several days before. Some authors, using the concept of “martyrology,” consider the dead as pure spiritual sacrifice for the sake of the country.

Yevgen Shatalov, February 26, 2014

I was very impressed by the look of a dying activist on February 20 in a photo published by different sources. It reflected some unearthly tranquility and humility, no fear and hatred. And today, visiting the Maidan, I learned that after the first protestors had been shot, priests didn't let anybody out on the front line without confession. Also priests with shields in their arms were directly in the line of fire and heard the confessions of the badly injured. Then I understood that the Nebesna Sotnia really was “heavenly”; I understood, why all these three months priests were at the Maidan, why activists of the Prayer Tent distributed the Gospel, prayed with people for repentance, spoke about God. All this time Christians trained these warriors for the final battle for freedom of Ukraine, they prepared “Nebesna Sotnia,” “preparing their body” for burial like Mary Magdalene.

Thus, some features of the narrative provide elements typical for a myth creation, such as sacrifice on behalf of community, which is, according to Anthony Smith, an essential requirement for the ideal of a national destiny and creation of a new national myth:

Some have even claimed that regular blood sacrifice of the nation's youth is essential to the creation and preservation of the nation. Without going

so far, we can easily see how the ideal of public sacrifice could inspire in successive generations a desire to emulate their ancestors and repair or strengthen the bonds of political solidarity. Such a view shifts the emphasis away from the act of sacrifice itself to its mythic and symbolic consequences for the future direction of the nation, and to the successive representation of the 'identity' and goals of the national community (Smith 2009: 97).

Although the dead of January-February 2014 have become national heroes, at the same time, they are still known as real people, documented with a lot of factual information, witnesses, and detailed biographical histories. According to Danylo Sudin's review of various definitions of "myth," a myth requires a specific social group's imagination about the sacred past that has no more witnesses, and historical memory can become a myth no earlier than three generations after a specific historical event. It is still a contesting narrative.

The historical periods central to the discussion, the Cossack Sich, Ukrainian National Republic and WWII, made a significant contribution to the formation of new narratives related to the *Heavenly Hundred (Nebesna Sotnia)* and referred to already existing important symbols. The combined narrative seems to have brought together components of all mentioned historical periods with different emphases in each. It includes the protestors' self-identification with the imagined warriors as the Cossacks, sacrifice for the sake of the country and emphasized civic national component vs. communist past, where the pro-government side romanticized the latter.

The Cossack heroic myth was employed without re-assessment to name the self-defence structure of the Maidan, and it served as its basis prior to the most tragic events. It is one of three main myths, including "the golden age," suffering and heroic struggle narratives, which influence a national self-identification, according to Danylo Sudin (2014). Certainly, the drastic confrontation that occurred in real time should evoke a large number of narratives on struggle and suffering. The Ukrainian National Republic period was not articulated so clearly but had implied meaning. This period is connected both to the Cossack theme through the "sotnias," and to WWII discourse through the protestors' greeting "Glory to Ukraine!" and its response "Glory to the Heroes!" The latter was invented during Ukrainian National War, 1919–1922, and widely used in the Ukrainian Insurgent Army during WWII. Today it has a new meaning of liberating movement from the Soviet regime and securing the independence of the country in the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Facebook authors in

my collection make no direct reference to the source of the greeting, the same as to the word “sotnia.” As a result, it re-assesses the Soviet past in the context of contemporary Ukraine, appearing first in protest lore and was acquired by the official institutions. In the WWII discourse, both sides used negative connotations typical of Soviet-style heroic narratives for the ‘other’ side. This period did not contribute directly to the *Heavenly Hundred* (*Nebesna Sotnia*) narrative but served as a moral category. Apparently, the same interpretations of the period, used for the negative portrait of the two opposing sides, could not fit them anymore. No positive connotations were developed in connection with the WWII time, but rather with the Cossack times and the early 20th century efforts for Ukrainian independence. New perception and re-assessment of the discourse was required, and the new government institutionalized the process shortly afterwards. Here protest lore and new institutional narratives have similarities in meaning and interpretations.

Conclusions

This paper provides many examples of how components referring to the historical periods mentioned contribute to a new narrative based on personal stories, traditional songs and memorial rites. The folk elements are parts of symbols popularized through commercial culture and adopted by the high culture with the example of the song *Plyve kacha po Tysyni*. Facebook authors engaged in the subsequent traumatic events focused a lot on their personal reflections on the transformative experience after multiple deaths of protestors that shed light on the mechanism of the invention of new symbols through the *Heavenly Hundred* (*Nebesna Sotnia*) narrative and the process of its institutionalization. It facilitated discussion in these circumstances among diverse narratives re-assessing the past and after the requisite time may lead to a new myth formation.

This protest lore served for relationship building, suggested by the perspective on personal experience stories. They also functioned to create a sense of community and to validate the participants’ experience and the significance of the events for the engaged participants. These personal stories helped to form the sense of belonging to the newly created and fuzzily bonded group of authors virtually engaged in the protests. The engaged authors’ reflections on their transformative experience shed light on the invention of new symbols: the protests as a liminal phase in their community’s life. Experienced cultural trauma contributes to the understanding of the creation of new symbols. The *Heavenly Hundred*

(*Nebesna Sotnia*) narrative, and its correlation to the repertoire of motifs and terms of selected historical periods, illustrates the interpretative means of this protest lore and hinted at its impact on institutional changes of commemorative practices.

Authors of the Facebook posts did not necessarily have any connection among themselves apart from commenting about the protests. They were assembled as a virtual group, having little structure or hierarchical relations, few developed norms or prohibitions, no distinctions of age, gender, ethnicity, language, place of residence, religion, social group, professional occupation, etc.

My own position, as both an insider and an outsider, observing participant and participating observer emotionally engaged in the events, gives rise to a question about biased conclusions and awareness of the researcher's subjectivity. I definitely found myself taking one side in the "us vs. them" general narrative that I focused on in this project, including elements of ambiguity and competing interpretations of the events that took place among supporters of the Maidan. My subjectivity likely influenced the allocation and formulation of the topics, which served as a basis for the statistical analysis. However, I suggest that the chosen methods and aspects of the research helped to avoid subjective interpretations in other respects. I suggest that more topics and juxtapositions to historical events not included in this review also contributed to a broader narrative appraising the Maidan protests and provided more competing components that have still to be assessed.

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