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**Mulyar Anatoly**

*Candidate of Historical Sciences,*

*Associate Professor of the Department of Social and Humanities*

*University of Economics and Entrepreneurship*

*ORCID: 0000-0002-7629-301X*

**BETWEEN TRADITION AND IDEOLOGY: PERSONALITIES,  
SCHOLARLY APPROACHES, AND INSTITUTIONAL ACTIVITIES OF  
RESEARCHERS OF REGIONAL HISTORY OF RIGHT-BANK  
UKRAINE (LATE 19th – MID-20th CENTURY)**

***Summary.** This article provides a comprehensive historiographical analysis of leading researchers in the regional history of Right-Bank Ukraine from the late 19th to the mid-20th century. Drawing on the biographies and scholarly legacies of figures such as Pavlo Klepatsky, Yukhym Sitsinsky, Valentyn Otamanovsky, and others, the study explores the evolution of research approaches, source studies, and the development of institutional frameworks for historical scholarship in the region.*

*Special attention is devoted to the influence of ideological factors—from imperial to Soviet—on the formation of academic traditions, thematic priorities, methodologies, and the interpretation of historical processes. The article demonstrates how, despite political pressures, repression, and various constraints, these scholars remained committed to academic integrity, advanced source studies, local history, and archival science, and contributed to the development of Ukrainian historical scholarship and national identity.*

*The study highlights the institutional activities of these researchers, including the establishment of museums, archives, scholarly societies, and*

*educational initiatives, as well as the introduction of new sources into academic circulation. The article also analyzes their contributions to the study of agrarian history, local self-government, church and social history, and examines the challenges of source availability, methodological innovation, and interdisciplinarity.*

*In summary, the author argues that the combination of academic tradition, institutional engagement, and resistance to ideological pressure ensured the resilience and development of regional historiography in Right-Bank Ukraine under the complex political transformations of the first half of the twentieth century.*

**Key words:** *Right-Bank Ukraine, historiography, regional history, source studies, agrarian history, local self-government, academic tradition, ideology, Soviet period, institutional development, repression, national identity.*

**Problem Statement.** Researching the history of Right-Bank Ukraine in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries is impossible without analyzing the contributions of leading regional scholars who, despite complex political transformations and ideological pressure, laid the foundations of modern historical science. The scholarly activities of Pavlo Klepatsky, Yukhym Sitsinsky, Valentyn Otamanovsky, and their contemporaries were characterized not only by a high level of source criticism but also by a desire for an objective, systematic understanding of the past, the organization of scholarly life, and the implementation of innovative approaches in the study of agrarian history, local self-government, and social and cultural processes.

At the same time, the historiographical tradition of this period was shaped under conditions of stringent ideological control, repression, and restricted access to sources, which influenced both the thematic scope of research and the interpretation of historical phenomena. A significant number of scholars faced persecution, were forced to adapt to the demands of Soviet ideology, or worked

under imperial pressure. This determined the specifics of their scholarly output, combining academic tradition with ideological compromises, and defined the role of regional researchers in preserving national historical memory.

The relevance of this study lies in the necessity of a comprehensive analysis of the personalities, scholarly approaches, and institutional activities of historians in Right-Bank Ukraine. It aims to examine the impact of ideological factors on the development of historiographical tradition and to understand their role in shaping source studies, agrarian history, and research on local self-government. This allows for a deeper understanding of the patterns in the development of regional historical science and outlines prospects for its further study in contemporary conditions.

**Methodology.** This article employs an interdisciplinary approach that combines historiographical, biographical, source-critical, and comparative methods. The analysis is primarily based on the works of leading researchers of Right-Bank Ukraine's regional history from the late 19th to mid-20th centuries, as well as archival materials, memoirs, periodical publications, and documents from museum and scholarly institutions.

The historiographical analysis allowed for tracing the evolution of scholarly approaches, thematic priorities, and methodological innovations in the works of historians such as P. Klepatsky, Yu. Sitsinsky, V. Otamanovsky, and others. The biographical method enabled the revelation of how personal life circumstances, political repression, and ideological pressure influenced the formation of scholarly positions and the selection of research topics.

The source-critical approach ensured a rigorous analysis of the historical sources used by these historians, including archival documents, record books, chronicles, and field materials. This allowed for an assessment of their level of source criticism and their innovative contributions. The comparative method was utilized to juxtapose the scholarly works, institutional activities, and approaches of different researchers, identifying commonalities and distinctions in their work.

Particular attention was paid to the influence of ideological factors (imperial, Soviet) on scholarly activity, thematic restrictions, the interpretation of historical processes, and the institutional development of historical science in the region.

This comprehensive methodological approach not only allows for the reconstruction of individual contributions to the development of regional historiography but also for understanding the patterns of academic tradition formation under conditions of political transformations and ideological pressure.

**Analysis of Recent Research and Publications.** Over the past few decades, the development of regional historiography in Right-Bank Ukraine from the late 19th to the mid-20th century, along with the contributions of specific individuals to the establishment of source studies, agrarian history, and local self-government, has garnered increasing attention from researchers.

A significant body of scholarly work has focused on analyzing the academic legacy of Pavlo Klepatsky, Yukhym Sitsinsky, Valentyn Otamanovsky, Anatoliy Bondarevsky, Petro Klymenko, and others. Monographs and articles by scholars such as V. Halaiba, I. Robak, Z. Savchuk, O. Cheban, S. Podolynny, M. Mazur, and A. Mulyar examine both the biographical aspects of these historians' activities and their contributions to the development of source-critical approaches, local history, archival studies, urban history, agrarian history, and local self-government.

Specific studies are dedicated to analyzing the impact of ideological factors on the formation of scholarly tradition under imperial and Soviet rule (I. Robak, O. Cheban, V. Halaiba). Researchers emphasize that most historians worked under conditions of political pressure, repression, and restricted access to sources, which significantly influenced their thematic priorities, methodology, and interpretation of historical processes.

Works focusing on the history of museums, archives, and scholarly societies in Podillia and Right-Bank Ukraine (authored by Yu. Sitsinsky, V.

Otamanovsky, and P. Klepatsky) have made a significant contribution to understanding source-critical culture and institutional activity. The role of these researchers in shaping regional identity, preserving historical memory, and popularizing historical knowledge is also analyzed separately.

Despite significant achievements in contemporary historiography, there's still a lack of comprehensive comparative analysis of the personalities, scholarly approaches, and institutional activities of leading researchers in Right-Bank Ukraine within the context of ideological influences. Questions regarding interdisciplinarity, the interaction between academic tradition and ideological pressure, and the impact of these processes on the development of regional historical science in the first half of the 20th century remain insufficiently explored.

This article aims to partially fill this gap by offering a comparative analysis of key figures, their scholarly approaches, institutional involvement, and their role in shaping the historiographical tradition of Right-Bank Ukraine.

**Presentation of the Main Research Material.** The watershed era of the early 20th century presented Ukrainian scholars with significant challenges, demanding not only professional mastery but also personal resilience and adaptability. Researchers who had developed in an environment of relative academic freedom and openness to European ideas suddenly found themselves at the epicenter of radical changes following the establishment of Soviet rule. The era of "bourgeois" science, which valued autonomy and individual thought, gave way to total ideological control, political repression, and the unification of worldviews.

This transition became a profound personal drama for many intellectuals. To survive in the new environment, they had to seek compromises between their own convictions and official doctrine, resort to self-censorship, choose "safe" research directions, or even feign loyalty. The Bolshevik system sought to subordinate the multifaceted, nationally oriented Ukrainian academic elite to the

ideals of class struggle, demanding a rejection of "bourgeois nationalism." This pressure significantly impacted the fates and work of an entire generation of scholars.

Some scholars were forced to cease their academic activities or faced repression; others adapted, seeking a balance between internal integrity and external loyalty; still others consciously made compromises to continue their research. Each navigated their own path—from initial enthusiasm to disillusionment, from openness to forced caution.

It was within this complex context that the lives and scholarly trajectories of Pavlo Klepatsky, Yukhym Sitsinsky, Valentyn Otamanovsky, and their contemporaries were shaped. Their experiences are not just a record of academic achievements but also a testament to the struggle for dignity and professional honor in an era where every step could have fatal consequences.

By analyzing their contributions to regional historiography, source studies, and institutional development, we simultaneously delve into the dramatic process of transformation of the Ukrainian intelligentsia under the pressure of Soviet ideology. These personal dramas, compromises, and acts of bravery are an integral part of the history of science and provide crucial context for understanding their scholarly work, which will be further examined.

Pavlo Hryhorovych Klepatsky (1885–1938) was a prominent Ukrainian historian, local lore researcher, and archivist whose contribution to the study of Ukrainian history, particularly that of Kyiv region and Podillia, is undeniable. His role in the establishment of historical science in Podillia during the 1920s and 1930s is especially significant. He was born on March 30, 1885, in the village of Puhachivka, Kyiv Governorate [6, pp. 2-6].

The period after 1918 saw Klepatsky's active engagement in pedagogical and administrative work: he served as a privatdozent, and later a professor, at Kamianets-Podilsky University, and also held the position of rector at the Kamianets-Podilsky Institute of Public Education. During this time, he not only

lectured extensively but also prolifically published scholarly articles on Ukrainian history, literary criticism, and source studies. Unfortunately, his subsequent fate was tragic: he was repressed in the late 1930s and likely executed during the widespread Stalinist terror. It is important to note that even during his teaching career, Klepatsky faced persecution due to his views, which were then interpreted by the authorities as "liberal" and "nationalistic" [1, p. 89].

As a representative of the archival and source studies school, Klepatsky prioritized working with original documents from administrative institutions, local self-government bodies, and judicial systems of the Podillia Governorate. In his research, he consistently applied the empirical-critical method, meticulously verifying the authenticity of sources. His scholarly works were distinguished by exceptional accuracy, scrupulous adherence to chronology, and a deeply analytical approach to studying regional history. Klepatsky total body of work comprised about 15 significant scholarly publications, including articles, lecture courses, and monographs. Among the most well-known are: "Essays on the History of the Kyiv Land" (1910) [17]; "Overview of Sources on the History of Ukraine: Byzantine, Arabic, Western, Ukrainian-Rus' Legal Monuments, Chronicles, Chronographs, and Synodyks" (1920) [18]; "Overview of Sources on the History of Ukraine: A Course of Lectures Delivered During the 1919 Academic Year" (1921) [19]; "On the So-Called Complete Rus' or Manuscript Cossack Chronicle" (1927) [20]; and "Notes on the History of Ukraine" (1930) [21].

Klepatsky research spanned various aspects of Ukrainian history, covering both the medieval and modern periods. His works focused on the history of the Kyiv region, Podillia, and Poltava region. Additionally, he dedicated himself to studying Ukrainian historiography and the creative legacy of prominent figures such as Yevhen Hrebinka, Hryhorii Skovoroda, and Petro Hulak-Artemovsky.

His primary monograph is considered to be "Overview of Sources on the History of Ukraine: Byzantine, Arabic, Western, Ukrainian-Rus' Legal



Monuments, Chronicles, Chronographs and Synodyks, Travelers' Accounts by Foreigners" (1920). This study marked the first attempt in Soviet historiography to systematically synthesize diverse sources on Ukrainian history from antiquity to the early modern period. According to the author, sources are the "foundation" upon which any truly scientific historical concept must be built [19, p. 5]. The publication was prepared during the development of the Kamianets State Ukrainian University and reflects the high level of academic culture of the young Ukrainian historical school of the 1920s. The author consistently outlined the general characteristics of each group of sources, provided a historiographical reference, and analyzed their scholarly reliability, source specificity, and potential for studying the political, social, legal, and cultural history of Ukraine.

At the time of its publication (1920), the work was groundbreaking in three aspects: Klepatsky proposed a clear typology of sources, which was then absent in domestic historiography; he did not limit himself to "internal" Rus' monuments but included the Byzantine, Arabic, and Latin contexts; and the study was prepared as a lecture course, which held practical significance for shaping a new generation of Ukrainian historians. This work essentially initiated the source studies tradition in Ukrainian historical science, preceding analogous Soviet-era publications.

However, despite its fundamental contribution to the establishment of Ukrainian historical source studies, the research had certain shortcomings: the absence of an archeographical apparatus (despite its overview nature, it lacked clear references to pages or specific volumes of sources) and the heterogeneity of the analysis, as some sources were examined in detail while others were only briefly touched upon.

Yukhym Yosypovych Sitsinsky (1859–1937), one of the leading regional historians and local lore researchers of Podillia, was born in the village of Maznyky, Podillia Governorate. He authored over 300 scholarly works and more



than 150 reviews of historical-local lore and ethnographic articles, covering the history of churches, schooling, daily life, and the economy of Podillia.

After taking holy orders, Sitsinsky became a priest of the cathedral and an advisor to the bishop. In 1890, he assumed the position of editor of "Podolskiye Eparhialnye Vedomosti" (Podillia Diocesan News) and was one of the initiators of the region's first historical museum, the Kamianets-Podilsky Antiquities Repository. In 1903, he headed the Podillia Church Historical and Archeological Society. Sitsinsky was a staunch supporter of an independent Ukrainian state, unhesitatingly serving in the Podillia People's Administration of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR), was among the founders of Kamianets-Podilsky Ukrainian University, and passionately advocated for the autocephaly of the Ukrainian church [57].

Unfortunately, his activities were accompanied by persecution. In March 1921, Yukhym Sitsinsky was accused of counter-revolution and arrested, though he was later released due to lack of evidence. After his release, he actively continued to publish, working in the museum. In 1929, he was re-arrested and subsequently released, but stripped of all his positions. The city authorities requisitioned his house, forcing Sitsinsky to move to a rented apartment on the outskirts of the city, which led to the sale of his unique library, archive, and furniture [57].

His works covered local history, architecture, printing, daily life, rituals, church history, and the castles and cities of Podillia. He laid the foundations for Podillia studies, creating a systematic description of the region's historical monuments. His key monographs dedicated to the post-reform period include: "The City of Kamianets-Podilsky. A Historical Description" (1895) [33]; "Historical Information on Parishes and Churches of the Podillia Eparchy" (1895–1911, 7 volumes) [34]; "Materials for the History of Monasteries of the Podillia Eparchy" (1891) [35]; "Essays on the History of Podillia" (1927) [37];

and "Defensive Castles of Western Podillia in the 14th–17th Centuries" (1928) [38].

Sitsinsky researched the history, archaeology, ethnography, architecture, and art of Podillia. He conducted numerous archaeological excavations, summarizing their results in his fundamental work, "Archaeological Map of Podillia Governorate" (1901) [32], where he documented about 2,000 sites dating from the Stone Age to Kyivan Rus'. He founded the first public museum in Podillia—the Museum of the Podillia Church Historical and Archaeological Society (in 1903), which became the foundation of the modern Kamianets-Podilsky Historical Museum [54]. Sitsinsky was an editor of Podillia periodicals and prepared over 300 scholarly works. He actively supported the Ukrainization of the church, participated in the autocephalous movement, and was a member and founder of many scholarly and local lore societies, including the Nestor the Chronicler Historical Society [54].

One of his defining studies, characterizing Russian rule in Kamianets, is the monograph "The City of Kamianets-Podilsky. A Historical Description." This work provides a topographical description of the city, tracing its chronological development from ancient Rus' times (12th–13th centuries) to the end of the 19th century. It includes an analysis of fortifications, urban development, and religious structures, and examines the city's demography and daily life.

In the chapter "Kamianets under the Russian State," Yu. Y. Sitsinsky examines the period in the history of Kamianets-Podilsky after the annexation of Podillia to the Russian Empire. The author meticulously analyzes the political, social, and economic changes that occurred in the city under Russian rule. In his view, the city lost its significance as a border fortress but became an important administrative center of the Podillia Governorate. The city was integrated into the imperial system of governance. The introduction of Russian administrative structures, new government bodies, and official positions changed the traditional system of urban self-government. This fostered the formation of a new urban

elite, primarily composed of officials of imperial origin. The transition to Russian rule stimulated the development of trade, and crafts, and the emergence of new economic ties with other regions of the empire. At the same time, the city's economy became more dependent on broader imperial processes [33].

Yu. Y. Sitsinsky's research was fundamental and systematic in nature. He extensively used archival documents, manuscripts, field research materials, and oral testimonies, which significantly enhanced the reliability of his conclusions. Sitsinsky was the first to create an archaeological map of Podillia, laying the foundations for Podillia's local lore studies. He actively engaged in educational activities: he edited scholarly collections, organized local lore societies, and delivered lectures to a wide audience [22, p. 107].

However, his work was not without certain limitations. His research was conducted in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when modern archaeological, dating, and analytical methods were unavailable. He often used sources without proper criticism, as not all documents could be verified or cross-referenced. Some of his assessments and terminology reflect the influence of Russian imperial historiography of that time (for example, an emphasis on the role of the Russian administration and a certain underestimation of local Ukrainian traditions). The researcher's attention was primarily focused on political, administrative, and ecclesiastical history, while socio-economic and everyday aspects of the population's life were covered in less detail.

Valentyn Dmytrovych Otamanovsky (1893–1964) was a distinguished Ukrainian historian, legal scholar, publicist, bibliographer, and archivist. Born in the village of Yablunivka, Smila Volost, Otamanovsky became an active participant in Ukrainian cultural and scholarly life as early as the 1910s. Alongside Mykola Mikhnovsky, he co-founded the Polubotok Military Organization and was one of the organizers of the Ukrainian Central Rada. He also took part in the defense of Ukraine against Muravyov's troops at Kruty with student youth [56].

Otamanovsky scholarly output comprises over 50 works. In 1946, he successfully defended his Candidate of Sciences dissertation at Moscow University on the topic: "Vinnytsia as a Type of Ukrainian City in the Southern Right-Bank Ukraine of the 14th–18th Centuries: The Evolution of Legal Status Against the Background of Socio-Economic Development of the Buh Region in the 13th–17th Centuries and the Process of Estate Formation. A Historical-Legal Study" [28]. Among his most well-known works are: "Cycle of Lectures on Podillia Studies" (1924) [25]; "Local Lore in Podillia, Its Immediate Tasks and Needs, and the Role of the Cabinet for Podillia Studies in Local Lore Work" (1930) [26]; "On the History of Medicine and Pharmacy in Vinnytsia and Vinnytsia County in the Second Half of the 18th Century" (1930) [27]; and "Cities of Right-Bank Ukraine Under the Rule of Polish Nobility from the Mid-17th to the End of the 18th Century: (The Problem of the Emergence and Development of the Ukrainian Feudal City)" (1955) [29].

A fundamental work by V. D. Otamanovsky in the field of Ukrainian urban history is the monograph "Cities of Right-Bank Ukraine Under the Rule of Polish Nobility from the Mid-17th to the End of the 18th Century" (1956). The research is based on archival documents, record books, and urban privileges, which allowed for the reconstruction of the administrative structure of cities under the rule of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the economic mechanisms of urban communities, particularly the role of craft guilds and trade. The author defined the legal status of townspeople under Polish noble dominance.

Otamanovsky argued that the feudal-serfdom economic system in the territories of Volhynia, Kyiv Polissia, and Podillia did not disappear throughout the 17th century due to various political processes. He also asserted that the northwestern part of Right-Bank Ukraine (Volhynia, Kyiv Polissia, and northwestern Podillia) suffered relatively little damage during the Ruin and largely preserved its economic potential. By the end of the 17th or beginning of

the 18th century, the shortage of peasant population here was fully replenished, and the corvée-manorial economy was restored [59].

Otamanovsky contended that Ukrainian cities emerged as organs of local self-government, rather than being introduced "from above" by Polish authorities. Prior to the introduction of Magdeburg Law in the Right Bank, there existed a distinctive urban system based on the traditions of ancient Rus' and Ukrainian customary law. An integral part of this system was an independent communal ("kopny") court, conducted by assemblies of all inhabitants of the settlement [59]. The study focuses on the right bank, without a deep comparison to the Left Bank or Galicia.

Valentyn Dmytrovych Otamanovsky's scholarly activity was characterized by a high academic level and innovation. He was among the first to conduct a comprehensive study of the history of Ukrainian cities in Right-Bank Ukraine, particularly Vinnytsia. He utilized a wide range of archival documents, record books, and urban privileges, enabling a deep reconstruction of the administrative, legal, and socio-economic structures of these cities. Otamanovsky established a unique regional studies center, the Cabinet for Podillia Studies, formulated the objectives of the regional studies movement and developed methodological recommendations that significantly influenced the development of local lore in Ukraine [30, pp. 44–46]. He widely employed an interdisciplinary approach, combining history, law, ethnology, and the history of medicine in his research, thereby expanding the boundaries of traditional historiography. He also led scientific coordination efforts and contributed to the creation of scholarly libraries and museums, especially in Vinnytsia, making a significant contribution to the development of Ukrainian science and culture.

However, the period of Bolshevism significantly influenced the evolution of Otamanovsky's views and left a noticeable mark on the formation of his social and political positions. Some of his works from the Soviet period contain terminology and concepts characteristic of the prevailing ideology (e.g., "feudal

city"), which sometimes limits the contemporary understanding of his conclusions and requires correction in light of new research. Due to political persecution (his arrest in 1929 on the fabricated "Union for the Liberation of Ukraine" case), his scholarly activity was interrupted, negatively impacting the completeness and continuity of his research [53].

The researcher's primary focus was on Right-Bank Ukraine, particularly Podillia, which meant other regions of Ukraine, including Left-Bank Ukraine or Galicia, were not given attention. Despite his significant contributions, Otamanovsky name remained largely unknown to the broader public for a long time, complicating the influence of his scholarly legacy on contemporary historiography.

Arkadiy Vasylyovych Bondarevsky was a prominent Ukrainian historian who specialized in researching the socio-administrative aspects of peasant self-government in Ukraine after the 1861 reform. His main work, the monograph "Volost Administration and the Status of Peasants in Ukraine After the 1861 Reform" (1961) [2], became a fundamental study of volost administration as the executive body of peasant class self-government.

In this study, the author conducted a comprehensive analysis of volost administration as an institution of peasant self-government that emerged after the abolition of serfdom, considering its organizational structure, functions, and interaction with state bodies [31, p. 117]. He also traced the process of restoring the historical tradition of volost administration, from ancient Slavic times to its formalization as an administrative-territorial unit of the Russian Empire by the Edict of Paul I in 1797.

Based on a wide range of sources and literature, Bondarevsky thoroughly examined the regulatory framework for the activities of volost institutions, particularly the Regulation of 1861 and subsequent reforms. He revealed the role of volost boards in the socio-economic life of peasants, specifically in matters of managing communal land, justice, social protection, and cultural and educational

activities, which extended beyond the traditional understanding of it merely as an organ of control and tax collection. The researcher identified contradictions in the functioning of volost self-government, particularly its dual role as an institution with a certain autonomy, yet simultaneously subservient to state administration and local bureaucracy. He also highlighted the material and financial aspects of the activities of volost boards and rural communities, which had been almost unexamined before, and their significance for the effectiveness of peasant self-government.

Bondarevsky critically re-examined traditional assessments of the reforms in the second half of the 19th century, particularly those by Soviet and pre-revolutionary researchers. He aimed to demonstrate the complexity and ambiguity of the modernization processes within the peasant system. He pointed out that volost elders and village headmen, though elected by assemblies, effectively became part of the local administration, subject to control by state bodies, especially the police and zemstvo chiefs. The volost board was a collegial body that did not operate continuously but convened only on specific days to address a defined range of issues, with the volost elder playing a decisive role [2, p. 53].

Bondarevsky concluded that volost administration had a limited character of self-government, as volost assemblies were not permitted to exceed their competence, and the activities of volost boards were under strict supervision.

The strength of his research lies in its broad source base. The author utilized a significant array of regulatory legal acts, archival documents, and literary sources, which gave the work its thoroughness and scholarly weight. He did not idealize the 1861 reform but rather highlighted its contradictions, specifically the economic dependence of peasants on landowners and the limitations on self-government due to bureaucratic control [12, p. 97].



A drawback of the monograph can be attributed to the methodological limitations of Marxist dogmas, which led to a certain one-sidedness in covering the regulatory legal framework of volost institutions [12, p. 97]. Due to ideological constraints, some aspects of volost administration and peasant self-government are examined unilaterally, without considering the complexity of socio-cultural processes and the diversity of peasant sentiments. The research focuses more on general trends, with less consideration for the regional peculiarities of volost institutions' functioning in different parts of Ukraine.

Pylyp Vasylyovych Klymenko (November 6, 1887 – July 8, 1955) was a prominent Ukrainian historian, source studies expert, archivist, and a student of M. Dovnar-Zapolskyi. He was born in the village of Yaroslavska, Chernihiv Oblast. He studied at Nizhyn Gymnasium, the Saint Petersburg Polytechnic Institute, and the history faculty of Saint Volodymyr Kyiv University.

In 1918–1919, he worked as a professor at the Ukrainian University in Kamianets-Podilsky. During the Directorate period, he headed the Committee for the Protection of Antiquities and Art in Kamianets-Podilsky. From 1924 to 1933, he was a staff member of the Archeographical Commission of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences (VUAN) and the Central Archival Administration of the Ukrainian SSR, as well as the research department of Ukrainian History. On May 19, 1938, he was arrested, and on March 5, 1939, accused of participating in an anti-Soviet bourgeois nationalist organization, he was sentenced to six years of imprisonment. He served his sentence in Krasnoyarsk Krai (Russian Federation) and was released in 1943. After the war, he lived in the urban-type settlement of Kozelets. He committed suicide [52].

His main fields of research were source studies, archival science, and the socio-economic history of Ukraine in the 17th–19th centuries. His scholarly legacy includes the following works: "Western Russian Guilds of the 16th–18th Centuries" (1914) [13]; "Font Graphics in the Ostroh Bible" (1926) [14]; "City

and Territory in Ukraine during the Hetmanate (1654–1767)" (1926) [15]; and "Guilds in Ukraine" (1929) [16].

In his research, Klymenko combined classical source studies with an analysis of social processes, applying Marxist approaches to the study of socio-economic history. In his methodology, he did not explicitly detail his interpretation of the 1861 reform, but within the context of source studies, he analyzed circulars and protocols regarding the abolition of serfdom, using them as documentation for economic transformations. He's considered one of the founders of domestic archaeographic and archival studies. He systematically researched the guild structure of Ukrainian cities in the 17th–19th centuries and laid the groundwork for source analysis. Therefore, contemporaries view his works as an invaluable source base, even if their interpretative scope is limited. His scholarly activity was constrained by the ideas of class struggle, and he did not sufficiently analyze cultural processes. In contrast to ideologically-driven researchers of the 1920s–1930s who were oriented towards Marxism (e.g., Dovnar-Zapolskyi), Klymenko focused more on the source studies aspect.

Klymenko's most renowned research was the monograph "Guilds in Ukraine" (1929) [16]. This was the first comprehensive work in Ukrainian historiography dedicated to the development of craft guilds. The publication is based on a thorough source analysis of archival materials from Podillia, Kyiv region, Volhynia, Slobozhanshchyna, and Left-Bank Ukraine, primarily from the 16th–18th centuries. Klymenko examined not only the organizational structure of guilds but also the socio-economic and ethnoconfessional aspects of their activities.

In this work, for the first time in Ukrainian historiography, a systematic source study of guild documents was conducted, which included statutes, protocols, privileges, and grievances [16, pp. 5-6]. He also introduced new archival materials from the Central State Archives of Ukraine (CSAU), the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, city magistrates, and Grodsky books into academic circulation

[16, pp. 9, 21, 64]. Klymenko carried out a theologization of guilds by regions, confessions (Orthodox, Catholic, Armenian), and degree of autonomy, which was an attempt at a socio-historical approach to the analysis of urban crafts [16, pp. 39-40]. In his research, he focused on the relationships between artisans, city authorities, and the Polish/Russian administration, which allowed him to view guilds not in isolation but as part of broader social structures [16, pp. 52-67]. Klymenko was critical of Russian and Polish historiography, which either idealized guilds or ignored their national specifics. The author presented documents preserving their original orthography and grammatical features, with explanations in comments, aiming to reveal the Ukrainian specificity of guilds in contrast to Western European or Muscovite models.

Alongside his immense contribution to historical science, it should be noted that the author never completed the guild topic. Although several volumes were planned, only one was published, and the concept remained unfinished [3, pp. 80-81]. Despite the stated social approach, the economic activities of guilds (production, distribution, profits) remained largely underexplored. Although the work was created in the 1920s, Klymenko was forced to write in the spirit of "class conflict" between the craft "elite" and "ordinary guild members," which is sometimes unsubstantiated [16, pp. 76-78]. The author rarely compared Ukrainian guilds with European ones, although such a perspective would have been valuable for understanding their specific characteristics. His ambitious archeographical program remained at the level of drafts and publications of individual documents. Although Klymenko possessed deep knowledge of archival science and source studies, his texts usually did not contain a separate theoretical section on research methods. This led to a lack of generalizations, concepts, or polemics; he tended to "describe" rather than "interpret" [48, p. 193]. Critics point out that Klymenko was primarily an archivist and source studies expert, rather than an analytical historian, and his texts are predominantly descriptive and fact-based.

Mykhailo Ivanovych Slabchenko (1882–1952) was a prominent Ukrainian historian, legal scholar, and academician of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences (VUAN). He was born in the village of Nerubaike, Odesa region, into a stonemason's family. He studied at the Odesa Theological Seminary, from which he was expelled for "underground" activities [49]. He continued his education at Novorossiysk (Odesa) University, studying history and law. He earned a master's degree and was sent to Germany to work on his dissertation, receiving a gold medal in 1908 [49].

Slabchenko held a pro-Ukrainian stance and was a member of the Revolutionary Ukrainian Party (RUP)/Ukrainian Social Democratic Labour Party (USDRP). He supported the Central Rada and the Directory while being skeptical, even hostile, towards the regime of Pavlo Skorupski, the White Guards, and the Bolsheviks. He was arrested several times and narrowly escaped execution by Denikin's forces [49]. He actively promoted the Ukrainization of education: he taught history in Ukrainian, and edited Ukrainian-language lectures and materials. He taught in Kamianets-Podilsky (1918) and Odesa (1919–1929). He initiated the organization of the Archaeographic Institute, the Mykola Kropyvnytskyi Odesa Ukrainian Theater Institute, research sections, local lore centers, and the "Prosvita" society [51]. In late 1929, he was elected an academician of VUAN.

In January 1930, Mykhailo Slabchenko was arrested in connection with the "Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (SVU)" case. In March–April 1930, a show trial began in Kharkiv, where Serhii Yefremov and Mykhailo Slabchenko were among the 45 defendants. Investigator Bruk openly stated: "We need to bring the Ukrainian intelligentsia to its knees" [58]. On April 19, 1930, Slabchenko was sentenced to 6 years of imprisonment and 10 years of restricted rights, expelled from VUAN, had his works confiscated, and was forbidden from engaging in scholarly activities. He was held in the Yaroslavl political isolator and later sent to Solovki. After his exile, in 1947, he returned to Pervomaisk, working as a

teacher and later an education inspector. However, during the "Zhdanovshchyna" campaign, he was again accused of "imperialism and fascism," definitively depriving him of the opportunity to conduct scholarly work [49]. He died in 1952 in relative isolation, without his status restored, having been morally and professionally destroyed.

Mykhailo Slabchenko's field of research was the socio-economic and legal history of Ukraine, especially the 17th–19th centuries. He studied the peasantry, guilds, economic structure, justice, and the formation of the labor market after 1861. His scholarly output comprises over 200 scientific articles, including materials in the "Notes of the Shevchenko Scientific Society," VUAN collections, and publications in Polish, German, and Russian. Between 1909 and 1929, he authored 12 monographs, 6 university textbooks, as well as journalistic and artistic texts [55].

Among his most notable works are: "Little Russian Regiment in Administrative Terms: A Historical-Legal Essay" (1909) [39]; "Essays on the History of Law in Little Russia, 17th–18th Centuries" (1911) [40]; "Materials for the Economic and Social History of Ukraine in the 19th Century" (1927) [41]; and "Economy of the Hetmanate, 17th–18th Centuries. Vol. I–IV. – Odesa–Kyiv: VUAN Publishers, 1922–1928" (1922–1928) [42].

In the context of post-reform historiography, M. I. Slabchenko's study, "Materials for the Economic and Social History of Ukraine in the 19th Century," is highly relevant. It stands as the first Soviet synthetic work of such scale, aimed at analyzing the social and economic processes in Ukraine after the 1861 reform. It contains systematized statistical data on the growth of urbanization and industrial trade before 1861, including statistics on fairs and industrial trade unions [41, pp. 64–66, 120–123]. Slabchenko introduces the concept of "commercial capital" as a driver of transformations, which was atypical for Soviet historiography of that era. He was also among the first to use the concept of

"semi-free hiring," evaluating the post-reform labor market as one with restricted rights, where the peasant remained economically dependent [41, pp. 28, 45]. He defined the 1861 reform as a "turning point in the economic and social history of modern Ukraine" [41, p. 28]. The work extensively utilized reformed documentation, including fair, governmental, and local records [41, p. 312]. During his research, he primarily focused on the situation of the peasantry, the urban poor, and the formation of the working class, and he analyzed major horizontal changes [41, p. 45]. The study also attempted to cover the process of urbanization and the emergence of landowner enterprises and factories [41, pp. 64–66].

A shortcoming of this research, in our opinion, is the active use of Marxist terminology ("class struggle," "exploitation") without adequate source foundation. The work fails to fully explain economic mechanisms and lacks a comprehensive analysis of prices, incomes, expenditures, credit, and so on. There's a strong orientation towards Southern Ukraine with little attention paid to Podillia and Volhynia.

Assessing Mykhailo Ivanovych Slabchenko as a researcher overall, considering his significant body of work as well as methodological and ideological limitations, several systemic shortcomings inherent in his scholarly approach can be identified. In his works of the 1920s, especially in Volume II of "Materials for the Economic and Social History of Ukraine," a complete adaptation to the Marxist-Leninist paradigm is noticeable. He uses clichés of "class struggle," "exploitation," and "bourgeois exploitation," even in cases where sources do not support such an interpretation [41, pp. 45–46]. Slabchenko often quotes statistics or archival document texts without deep source criticism; for example, fair reports are presented as fact without analyzing the collection methodology, representativeness, or social bias [41, pp. 64–66].

He avoids broad comparisons with Western Europe, even when studying the structure of the labor market or elements of bourgeois institutions. Under the

influence of Soviet doctrine, the historian ignores ethnocultural aspects, particularly the differences between Ukrainian, Polish, and Jewish communities regarding economic behavior, rent, land ownership, etc., which is especially noticeable in studies of the peasantry in Podillia and the South. Slabchenko often generalizes without sufficient empirical basis, for example, by stating that "all peasants after 1861 became semi-free hired laborers" without regional variation or quantitative assessment [41, p. 28]. In the context of modern scholarship, his methods require significant re-evaluation, although the body of sources he collected remains an important contribution to the economic historiography of Ukraine.

Petr Aleksandrovich Zaionchkovsky (1901–1984) was a prominent Soviet historian, Doctor of Historical Sciences (1950), Professor (1951), and Honored Scientist of the RSFSR (1980). He was born in Uralsk into the family of a military doctor. He studied at the Moscow and Kyiv Cadet Corps and worked at a railway and machine-building factory. He acquired his historical education extramurally, graduating from the history faculty of the Moscow Institute of History, Philosophy, and Literature (1937). He defended his Candidate of Sciences dissertation on the history of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood (1940) and his doctoral dissertation on the history of military reforms of the 1860s–1870s in the Russian Empire (1950) [11, pp. 171-173]. He worked as a professor at Moscow University, and from the 1950s, as a staff member of the Institute of History of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Under his academic supervision, more than 12 doctoral and about 50 candidate dissertations were defended.

His field of research encompassed the reforms of the 1860s–1870s in the Russian Empire, with a particular emphasis on the post-reform period. The researcher conducted a comprehensive analysis of economic, social, political, and institutional aspects, including Podillia in the general context. He authored nine monographs (eight of which were published) and numerous scholarly articles and studies on the socio-political and military history of the Russian Empire in the



19th–20th centuries. Zaionchkovsky also prepared and published several universal reference books on the history of the Russian Empire, and he published the diaries of prominent statesmen of that time [50].

Among his most well-known works are: "Military Reforms of 1860–1870 in Russia" (1952) [7]; "Implementation of the Peasant Reform" (1958) [8]; "Abolition of Serfdom in Russia" (1960) [9]; and "The Crisis of Autocracy at the Turn of the 1870s–1880s" (1964) [10].

The most renowned work by P. O. Zaionchkovsky concerning the post-reform period is the monograph "Implementation of the Peasant Reform of 1861" [8]. This work is dedicated to a comprehensive analysis of the peasant reform's implementation across the Russian Empire, with particular attention to regional specifics and analysis of statutory charters (*ustavnye gramoty*). The chronological scope covers the period from 1861 to 1870 (the first 9-year stage of the reform's implementation). The author aimed to clarify how the reform was put into practice, using 7,244 statutory charters and over 6,000 redemption agreements for this purpose. Geographically, the study covered 20 *uyezds* in 13 governorates, representing various economic zones: central Black Earth, non-Black Earth, and peripheral (including Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania). The compilation and content of statutory charters, in his opinion, were indicators of the actual progress of the peasant reform.

In Ukrainian lands, special regulations were in effect, notably the "Local Little Russian Regulation," which applied to Poltava, Chernihiv, and Kharkiv Governorates. It meticulously regulated land allotments, quitrent sizes, and the number of labor days owed. For instance, in Poltava Governorate, rent ranged from 2 to 2.5 rubles per *desyatina*, and labor obligations reached up to 21 days per year [8, p. 197]. As of January 1, 1863, the proportion of signed statutory charters in Right-Bank Ukraine was significantly lower than in other regions: Kyiv — 61.3% (260,977), Podillia — 56.5% (272,765) [8, p. 198]. After the Polish Uprising of 1863, Emperor Alexander II approved a new regulation (dated

July 25, 1863) for the Kyiv, Volhynia, and Podillia Governorates, which changed the nature of peasant liberation: instead of a temporarily obligated status, they were directly transferred to redemption. The administrative bodies were also changed: instead of uyezdnoble committees, mixed justice of the peace courts with government-appointed chairmen was established [8, pp. 205–206].

In his work, Zaionchkovsky meticulously details numerous abuses during the reform's implementation: data falsification, forged signatures, fraudulent reports, and the disregard for peasant participation. Most of these cases were recorded in Kyiv and Podillia Governorates, leading to inspections and interventions by the Main Committee [8, pp. 206–208]. According to the researcher, in the Right-Bank (Kyiv, Volhynia, Podillia), the government also pursued a political goal: to weaken the Polish nobility by offering advantageous terms to the Orthodox Ukrainian peasantry, including mandatory redemption, absence of quitrent, and loyal payments, which strengthened imperial influence [8, pp. 205–206].

Zaionchkovsky evaluates the 1861 reform as a partially progressive process that, however, did not resolve the fundamental problems of the peasantry. Peasants gained personal freedom but not sufficient land, and redemption payments became a heavy burden. The reform led to social differentiation of the peasantry, indicating the formation of capitalist relations [8, p. 112].

Like most Soviet historians, Zaionchkovsky operated within the Marxist-Leninist methodology. He analyzes the 1861 reform through the lens of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. The researcher actively employed Lenin's concept of "American" and "Prussian" paths of capitalist development in the countryside and linked the reform to the 1905–1907 revolution [8, pp. 7, 17]. However, compared to some other Soviet authors, Zaionchkovsky formulates fewer ideological assessments, preferring factual analysis and source material [8, p. 134].

Zaionchkovsky's monograph became one of the most detailed works on the implementation of the 1861 reform. He was the first to systematically analyze the process of the reform's execution, not just its text. He demonstrated the role of the administration, bureaucracy, and officials in its implementation, and revealed regional peculiarities in its introduction, which allowed for tracing its diverse consequences. During the Soviet period, the work was praised by historians, especially for the depth of its source analysis. However, some researchers pointed to an overly formal interpretation of the concept of the reform's "progressiveness," insufficient consideration of the real living conditions of peasants, and inadequate attention to the political aspects of the reform, particularly its impact on public opinion [5, p. 201].

In our opinion, the work's weaknesses include the absence of a cultural and ethnographic aspect, which prevents an understanding of how the reform was reflected in mass consciousness. There's also the formal use of Marxist terminology, which sometimes limits the depth of analysis. Although Zaionchkovsky is considered one of the most serious researchers of the 1861 reform, his works bear the characteristic weaknesses of Soviet historiography: the dominance of ideology over analysis, insufficient consideration of regional peculiarities (especially in Ukraine), and limited comparative analysis.

Petro Fedorovych Shcherbyna (1910–2001) was a distinguished Ukrainian historian, Doctor of Legal Sciences, professor, and specialist in the history of judiciary and legal reforms in Ukrainian lands during the 19th century. He was born in the village of Poltavka (Ussuriysk Krai) into a family of Ukrainian settlers from the Poltava region. He received his primary education at the Poltava zemstvo school and his secondary education at a workers' faculty. He studied at Moscow State University and also graduated from the history and law faculties of Lviv University [24, p. 252].

In 1929, he began his career as a worker at a tin can factory in Vladivostok, later working as a stevedore at the port and actively participating in Komsomol

activities. In 1932, after graduating from the workers' faculty, he was sent by the Komsomol regional committee to study at the Institute of Soviet Construction under the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the RSFSR. After completing his studies, he was assigned to work at the Primorsky Krai Executive Committee in Vladivostok [24, p. 252].

On May 22, 1944, P. F. Shcherbyna was appointed head of the public education department of the Dunaivtsi Rayon in Kamianets-Podilsky Oblast. In September 1949, he moved to the Russian language department of the Kamianets-Podilsky State Pedagogical Institute. In 1952, he began working as an attorney at the Kamianets-Podilsky legal consultation office, where for 12 years he combined his legal practice with teaching legal disciplines at the Kamianets-Podilsky Agricultural Institute.

P. F. Shcherbyna began his scholarly work at a mature age. In 1966, he defended his Candidate of Sciences dissertation on "The Peasant Reform of 1861 in Podillia"—the first comprehensive regional reconstruction of the reform in Right-Bank Ukraine. In 1977, he successfully defended his doctoral dissertation, "The Judicial System in Right-Bank Ukraine in the Late 18th – 19th Centuries," earning the degree of Doctor of Legal Sciences. From 1992, he worked as a professor at the Khmelnytskyi Institute of Regional Management and Law, heading the Department of Theory and History of State and Law [24, p. 257].

Shcherbyna was distinguished by his analytical thinking, broad erudition, and pedagogical skill, capable of conveying complex material in simple language. His main academic interests included: the agrarian history of Podillia in the 19th century; the implementation of the peasant reform of 1861; and the inventory reform of 1847–1848. His scholarly output comprises over 80 works (2 scholarly monographs and several dozens of articles).

Among his most well-known publications are: "The Peasant Movement in Podillia Governorate during the Reform of 1861" (1961) [44]; "The Judicial Reform of 1864 in Right-Bank Ukraine" (1974) [45]; "Court Disputes in

Subkomora Courts concerning Kamianets Lands in the 15th–16th Centuries" (1978) [46]; and "Administrative Division of Right-Bank Ukraine" (1980) [47].

His research, "The Peasant Reform of 1861 in Podillia" (1966), is most pertinent to the 1861 reform. For the first time, the author comprehensively analyzed the specifics of the reform's implementation in Podillia, drawing upon a wealth of archival material: over 900 inventories and 900 statutory charters from state archives in Kamianets-Podilskyi, Kyiv, and Zhytomyr [36]. The study examined the historical context of the reform, particularly the inventory reform of 1847–1848 as its foundation. It analyzed the content and practical implementation of the Local Statute of February 19, 1861, for the Podillia, Kyiv, and Volyn governorates. The research explored the specifics of the early termination of temporary peasant obligations in Right-Bank Ukraine, clarified their status before land redemption, the mechanisms of redemption, and redemption payments, and determined the nature and scale of the peasant movement in Podillia during the reform period [44]. A comparative approach was used to study the reforms in Right-Bank and Left-Bank Ukraine, allowing for an assessment of regional reform peculiarities [44]. The researcher emphasized that the nobility of Podillia, unlike that of Left-Bank Ukraine, actively resisted the reform, which influenced the conditions of its implementation and the socio-economic consequences for the peasants [4, pp. 50–52]. The conditions for the implementation of the 1861 reform in Podillia were "comparatively better for peasants" than in other regions, explained by the government's intention to limit the influence of the oppositionally-minded Polish nobility in Right-Bank Ukraine. However, even under these conditions, the land question for peasants in the Podillia governorate was not fully resolved [4, pp. 50–52].

In his research, Shcherbyna employed a comprehensive approach, combining historical-legal, socio-economic, and source study methods. He paid particular attention to working with mass archival sources—inventories and

statutory charters—which he systematized and analyzed in both quantitative and qualitative aspects [24, p. 251].

A perceived weakness of P. F. Shcherbyna's research, in our opinion, is the limited coverage of the cultural and psychological aspects of peasant life, which could have provided a deeper explanation for the motivations behind peasant protests. Additionally, the interpretation of the causes and consequences of the reform may have been influenced by the ideological conditioning of Soviet historiography of the 1960s. Furthermore, beyond Right-Bank and Left-Bank Ukraine, less attention was given to comparisons with other regions of the empire.

Shcherbyna's study, "The Judicial Reform of 1864 in Right-Bank Ukraine," is a thorough academic analysis of the reform's implementation process in the region, characterized by a comprehensive approach and extensive use of archival sources. The author investigates the specifics of the 1864 judicial reform's implementation in Right-Bank Ukraine, particularly in the Podillia Governorate. He analyzes the Russian authorities' personnel policy, the reform's impact on the local socio-political situation, and the specifics of judicial proceedings in the region. The work asserts that the reform introduced principles such as the separation of court from administration, permanence of judges, equality before the law, transparency, adversarial proceedings, trial by jury, election of justices of the peace, and prosecutorial oversight. However, in Right-Bank Ukraine, the reform was implemented with consideration for local specificities, including personnel discrimination against the Polish elite, which affected the formation of judicial bodies. Shcherbyna revealed the specific implementation of judicial reform in the Ukrainian governorates, especially regarding personnel policy and social consequences. The work provides an assessment of the challenges of introducing judicial reform in Right-Bank Ukraine, primarily emphasizing the phased implementation of changes (first justices of the peace, then general courts). The functioning of judicial institutions in the Western region is also analyzed [23, p. 50].

While P. F. Shcherbyna is considered one of the leading Ukrainian legal historians of the second half of the 20th century, his works are not without certain drawbacks. His research has limited coverage of the cultural and psychological aspects of peasant life, which could have provided a deeper explanation for the motivations behind peasant protests. Furthermore, his focus was concentrated on Right-Bank Ukraine, which narrowed the scope for broader comparisons with other regions of the empire. His works primarily feature legal and administrative analysis, while the socio-cultural aspects of judicial reform and its impact on the daily lives of the population are examined less deeply. He also employed Marxist-Leninist methodology in his research. He analyzed the judicial reform through the lens of a class-based approach, viewing it as part of bourgeois reforms aimed at strengthening the positions of the nobility and the bourgeoisie.

All eight scholars we've examined worked in the field of Ukrainian history, focusing on socio-economic and regional aspects, particularly in Podillia and the Right-Bank governorates. For instance, Pavlo Klepatsky researched Kyiv region and Podillia; Yukhym Sitsinsky concentrated on various aspects of life in Podillia (church history, economy, daily life); Valentyn Otamanovsky studied the history of Ukrainian cities (especially Vinnytsia and Podillia) during the early modern period; Arkadii Bondarevsky analyzed peasant self-governance after the 1861 reform; Petro Shcherbyna dedicated his works to the agrarian history of Podillia and the implementation of the 1864 judicial reform in Right-Bank Ukraine. Philip Klymenko was known as a source critic and archivist who researched the status of cities and craft guilds in Ukraine during the 16th–18th centuries. Mykhailo Slabchenko and Petro Zaionchkovsky, as Soviet scholars, worked on the socio-economic history of Ukraine and the Russian Empire in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly agrarian reforms and urban development. Thus, a common thread among all of them is their interest in the post-reform period of the 19th century and the associated socio-economic



transformations in Ukrainian lands, as well as an emphasis on events of the 17th–19th centuries and the local regional aspect.

The research of these historians primarily covers the 16th–19th centuries, with a particular focus on the era of the serfdom system and the post-reform period. Specifically, F. Klymenko studied the history of cities and guilds in the 17th–19th centuries during the Cossack Hetmanate, while P. Shcherbyna focused on peasant and judicial reforms in Right-Bank Ukraine. Soviet historians M. Slabchenko and P. Zaionchkovsky also concentrated their research on the second half of the 19th century, particularly the implementation of the reforms of the 1860s–1870s. Although some authors (e.g., P. Klepatsky) covered broader historical periods from antiquity to the early modern era, all of them, in their main works, focused on periods related to the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Ukraine.

All the aforementioned scholars maintained a high level of source-critical research, extensively utilizing archival documents. For instance, Klepatsky belonged to the "archival-source studies school" with an empirical-critical approach to primary documents. Sitsinsky used archival records, manuscripts, field research, and oral testimonies. Klymenko, as an archivist, researched guild statutes and inventories. Both P. Shcherbyna and A. Bondarevsky presented a large body of regulatory acts and act books; Shcherbyna, in particular, systematized over 900 inventories and 900 statutory charters, and Bondarevsky, more than a hundred legislative and revision documents. V. Otamanovsky reconstructed urban structures based on archival acts. The researchers' methodology combined detailed description with an analysis of socio-legal processes: some (predominantly Soviet authors) worked within the Marxist-Leninist paradigm, and many applied historical-legal and sociological analysis alongside traditional source studies. At the same time, all without exception demonstrated scrupulousness and descriptiveness, often focusing on factual

material, leading critics to note the "descriptive-factographic" nature of their works.

All the researchers discussed were closely connected with the Ukrainian academic environment of the first half of the 20th century. Several of them (Klepatsky, Sitsinsky, Shcherbyna) worked at Kamianets-Podilskyi University and other institutions in Podillia. V. Otamanovsky and P. Klymenko were employees of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences (VUAN) and participants in the Archaeographic Commission. M. Slabchenko, as an academician of VUAN, actively worked in Odesa, organizing archeographic institutes. P. Zaionchkovsky, as a professor at Moscow University and a researcher at the Institute of History of the USSR Academy of Sciences, represented the Soviet academic school, focusing on the 1861 reform. All of them maintained scholarly ties with Ukrainian historiography: they established local lore societies, created research centers for the study of Podillia (for example, the "Cabinet for the Study of Podillia" at the Vinnytsia branch of VUAN), and published local historical collections. Methodologically, their affiliation with the archival-source studies school of the interwar and early Soviet periods, as well as the Marxist tradition of Soviet historiography, is notable.

All authors consistently adhered to a formal academic style of presentation. Their texts contain detailed descriptions, precise chronologies, and a clear thematic structure, often with distinct sections or separate articles. For instance, Pavlo Klepatsky was known for his "accuracy and meticulous chronology" of events, and Mykhailo Slabchenko extensively illustrated his conclusions with statistical tables. At the same time, noticeable stylistic differences were observed among the researchers: some (Slabchenko, Zaionchkovsky, Bondarevsky) actively used ideological terms from the Marxist lexicon (e.g., "classes," "exploitation"), while others (Klymenko, Shcherbyna, Sitsinsky) avoided excessive doctrinal rhetoric, focusing on a purely source-based presentation of the material.

All these historians made significant contributions to the development of Ukrainian historiography, particularly in its regional and social aspects. Their works are often considered pioneering in their respective fields: P. Klepatsky's 1920 monograph initiated systematic source studies for Ukrainian history; Yu. Sitsinsky laid the groundwork for Podillia studies; F. Klymenko wrote the first comprehensive monograph on the development of craft guilds in Ukraine; M. Slabchenko prepared the first Soviet synthetic work on the economic and social history of 19th-century Ukraine; P. Shcherbyna conducted the first comprehensive regional reconstruction of the peasant reform in Podillia; A. Bondarevsky undertook a fundamental study of volost self-governance; and P. Zaionchkovsky performed a detailed analysis of the implementation of the 1861 reform in several governorates.

Thus, what unites all of them is the innovative and fundamental nature of their research—they not only revealed the source base of their topics within a broader context but also set directions for further study. At the same time, all of them encountered the ideological constraints of their era (which is especially evident in the influence of Soviet ideology on their assessments). Overall, these eight scholars are united by their commitment to detailed source-based research on Ukrainian regional history and have had a significant impact on the development of relevant academic schools.

**Conclusion.** An analysis of the works by Soviet historians focusing on agrarian reforms, particularly the abolition of serfdom in 1861, the volost administration, and the socioeconomic status of the peasantry, reveals both significant achievements and characteristic methodological limitations of Soviet historiography. Scholars of that period actively processed a wide range of primary sources—statutory charters, inventories, zemstvo reports, normative legal acts, documents from volost institutions, and court cases—which ensured the source depth and empirical rigor of their research. This is particularly evident in the works of Petro Shcherbyna, Pylyp Klymenko, Mykhailo Slabchenko, and Petro

Zaionchkovsky, who systematically collected, classified, and analyzed vast amounts of archival materials, often introducing them into scholarly discourse for the first time.

Research into regional specificities, especially in Right-Bank Ukraine (Podillia, Kyiv region, and Volyn), gained particular importance. Here, detailed analyses were conducted on the mechanisms of reform implementation, the state of volost administration, and the economic conditions of the peasantry. This contributed to the formation of regional historiography, which subsequently became the foundation for further academic inquiry, tracing the specificities of the Ukrainian context compared to general Russian models.

However, these studies are not without significant drawbacks, related both to the ideological context and the limitations of the scientific methodology of the time. The biggest weakness of Soviet researchers was their adaptation to the Marxist-Leninist paradigm, which led to the formal use of terms like "class struggle," "bourgeois development," or "exploitation" without sufficient primary source justification. Many authors generalized processes, failing to account for the complex social, cultural, and ethno-confessional diversity of the population, especially in multi-ethnic regions such as Podillia.

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