The main historiographic idea of the early Moscovite period of Russian history was that of continuity between Kiev and Moscow Rus'. The *translatio imperii* included the succession of its enemies. It was not without grounds, of course, since the Golden Horde, apart from a slight layer of Mongol aristocracy was in fact populated by Polovtsy—the same people Rus' had fought since the year 1061. Various versions of the tale about the battle of Kulikovo use the names Polovtsy or Pechenegs as synonyms for Tatars. The final victory over the Golden Horde and subsequent wars with Tatar khanates and Turkey further developed the idea of continuity in Russian-Turkic relations; the steppe nomads were seen *sub specie tartarorum*, and the subsequent political events were regarded in the light of their ancient origins in the first years of Russian history. The images of the Mongol-Tatars and of the militant nomads of Kievan times (Pechenegs, Turks and Polovtsy/Cumans) merged both in official historiography and in folklore. As a result, in modern times the story of Rus' relations with the Pechenegs and Polovtsy became an essential component in various historiosophic visions of Russia's place between East and West, Europe and Asia,
Christianity and Islam, forest and steppe. This article will attempt to look in the beginnings of the age-long Rus'/Russian tradition of imaging the steppe and its peoples. In particular, it will analyse Rus' ideas about the steppe peoples' origins, nature and mission in the world as they are discussed in the early twelfth-century Primary Chronicle, as well as the repercussions of these ideas in other Rus' and foreign (mostly West European) sources.

The long history of coexistence with Turkic neighbors produced a variety of peaceful as well as military interactions, and a variety of responses by Rus' chronicles and other literary sources. The level of animosity varied according to time, region and political affiliation, and sometimes even in the Tatar era gave way to friendlier feelings. The predominant attitude of chronicles is however rather negative, as is revealed already by the standard epithet *poganyi*, "pagan" or "non-Christian." When repeatedly applied to the Polovtsy it seems to have been not a mere indication of their paganism or non-Christianity, but as Elena Ch. Skrzhinskaia defined it, a "generally reproaching nickname." A recent study of the distribution of such epithets and terms which were applied to foreign peoples by Rus' chronicles concludes that the nomadic steppe peoples were singled out among other pagan and bellicose neighbors. The terminological estrangement from the nomads can be traced in the Primary Chronicle beginning with the articles for the year 1060, when the Torks were called "pagan," and 1061, when the Polovtsy were labeled as the "pagan and godless foes." Andreas Kappeler explains the early

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5. See two recent studies of medieval Rus' attitudes towards Tatars: Charles J. Halperin, *The Tatar Yoke* (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica, 1985), and V. A. Kuchkin, "Mongolo-tatarskoe igo v osveshchenii drevnerusskih knizhnikov (XIII-pervaia chetvert' XIV v.)," in *Russkaia kultura v usloviiakh inozemnykh nashestvi i voin. X--nachalo XX v.* Shornik nauchnykh trudov, ed. A. N. Kopylov (Moscow: Institut istorii SSSR AN SSSR, 1990), 1: 15-69.


7. Andreas Kappeler, "Ethnische Abgrenzung: Bemerkungen zur Ostslavischen Terminologie des Mittelalters," in *Geschichte Altrusslands in der Begriffsweite ihrer Quellen*, ed. Uwe Halbach, Hans Hecker, and Andreas Kappeler (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1986)[= Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des Östlichen Europa 26], 124-38. Both articles indicate a later perspective, so the actual tradition of epithets may have started closer to the time of the Primary Chronicle's composition. Outside of the chronicle tradition, the derogatory label of the steppe nomads could become even more retroactive as in the phrase about the "godless Pechenegs" in *Skazanie o Borise i Glehe*, see *Usponski sbornik XII-XIII vv.*, ed. S. I. Kotkov, O. A. Kniazevskiaia, V. G. Dem'ianov and M. V. Liapon (Moscow: Nauka, 1971), 43