

The Development of a Little Russian Identity and Ukrainian Nation-Building¹

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In Western Europe the development of national consciousness is linked so closely with the evolution of the state that the process is usually referred to as the emergence of the nation-state.² As traced by Marc Bloch, the first step in the process was the identification of the people and their territory by a distinct name.³ This rudimentary sense of identity was accompanied, or soon followed, by the expression of political loyalty, perhaps at first to a dynasty, but leading to patriotism toward a country.⁴ This patriotism was further reinforced by the awareness of a developing historical tradition.⁵ Finally, a unifying linguistic medium emerged that facilitated the creation of a national language, literature, and culture.⁶ Religion, which held the greatest claim

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² See Charles Tilly, ed. *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, 1975), and V. G. Kiemon, "State and Nation in Western Europe," *Past and Present*, no. 3 (1965): 20–38. There is a large body of work devoted primarily to the study of nationalism as an ideology, but the development of national consciousness in pre-modern times has received little attention. Hans Kohn in *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York, 1951), Hugh Seton-Watson in *Nations and States* (Boulder, 1977) and, most recently, John Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, 1984), all place greater emphasis on the historical antecedents of nationalism. The emergence of national consciousness in early modern Europe has been the subject of Orest Ranum, ed., *National Consciousness, History, and Political Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore, 1975). Several ground-breaking articles have traced the origins of national sentiment from medieval times. See H. Koht, "The Dawn of Nationalism in Europe," *American Historical Review* 52, no. 2 (January 1947): 265–80; E. H. Kantorowicz, "Pro Patria Mori in Medieval Political Thought," *American Historical Review* 56, no. 3 (April 1951): 472–92; J. Huizinga, "Patriotism and Nationalism in European History," in his *Men and Ideas* (New York, 1959), 97–155; K. Symmons-Symmonolewicz, "National Consciousness in Medieval Europe: Some Theoretical Problems," *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1981): 152–66, and his "National Consciousness and Social Theory," *ibid.* 7, no. 2 (Fall 1980): 386–90; also *idem*, "National Consciousness in Poland until the End of the Fourteenth Century: A Sociological Interpretation," *ibid.* 8, no. 2 (Fall 1981): 249–66.

³ M. Bloch, *Feudal Society*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1971), 2:432–37.

⁴ Koht, "The Dawn of Nationalism in Europe," 265–280.

⁵ Ranum, *National Consciousness*, 3–18.

⁶ For the importance of a common language and culture, see Stein Rokkan, "Dimensions of State Formation and Nation-Building: A Possible Paradigm for Research on Variations within Europe," in Tilly, *Formation of National States*, 562–600; Carlton J. H. Hayes, in his classic *The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism* (New York, 1931), placed great importance on linguistic and cultural factors.

over the loyalties of medieval and early modern man, played an ambiguous role. As a supranational body, the church in some instances hindered emerging national sentiments. However, religious differences, when coupled with ethnic strife, sparked the most intense proto-national feelings in early modern Europe.⁷

The elements of national consciousness coalesced gradually within a state structure which was itself evolving. The usual sequence of European states includes the feudal state, the *Ständestaat*, the absolute monarchy, and the nineteenth-century constitutional monarchy.⁸ As a greater part of the population was drawn into the state structure, national consciousness expanded from a tiny elite to the upper and middle classes and, finally, to the masses.⁹ In early modern Europe, national consciousness reached only the elite and upper classes. However, the slow organic development of the Western nation-state allowed these elites to build political structures, historical traditions, national languages and literatures, and cultural institutions before the emergence of a mass society, with its problems of political participation, socioeconomic redistribution, and, of course, national feeling.

The model of the Western nation-state presumes that territory, political structure, ethnicity, language, and culture were all more or less coterminous. However, even the most often-cited example of the modern nation-state, France, had and continues to have its ethnic minorities and varied languages and cultures. Despite the numerous exceptions, the model of a Western nation-state does serve a purpose in pointing to a type of modern nation which evolved so gradually that historians have difficulty in pinpointing either its beginning or culmination, and

⁷ The fusion of religious, social, and cultural factors in producing intense proto-national sentiment is described by Frank E. Sysyn, "Ukrainian-Polish Relations in the Seventeenth Century: The Role of National Consciousness and National Conflict in the Khmelnytsky Movement," in *Poland and Ukraine: Past and Present*, ed. Peter Potichnyj (Edmonton and Toronto, 1980), 58–82.

⁸ Gianfranco Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State: A Sociological Introduction* (Stanford, 1978); Tilly, *Formation of National States*.

⁹ Rokkan, "Dimensions of State Formation," 562–600. Mass mobilization is the subject of Karl Deutsch's *Nationalism and Social Communication* (New York, 1953).

which Hugh Seton-Watson has called “the old continuous nation.”¹⁰

Only a small number of nations experienced this slow process. Most modern nations were not merely the result of an organic development, but were also consciously molded by intellectuals and politicians in the modern period. Nations that had undergone some elements of the nation-state formation but were divided among several political units launched movements for political unification. In the German case, this process consisted in consolidating existing native political units into a single nation-state. In the Polish case, national consolidation had to be accompanied by the overthrow of several foreign powers. Another group of nation-builders faced an even more formidable task. Whereas the advocates of political unification of existing nations could rely on present or past native political structures, as well as developed national languages and cultures, the leaders of new nations had to base their movements primarily on ethnicity and spoken language. It was their task to devise a unifying script, create a literature, and, at the same time, convince the populace that it belonged to a nation. In most instances, this intelligentsia had to face suspicious and hostile political authorities that tried to smother any budding national movement.¹¹

It is almost axiomatic in Western historiography that Ukrainians belong to the category of new nations and that Ukrainian nation-building consisted primarily of transforming “ethnic-linguistic masses into a conscious Ukrainian political and cultural community.”¹² Although historians acknowledge that the nineteenth-century Ukrainian intelligentsia made use of some symbols and ideas from Cossack Ukraine, they see few direct links to it. My own contention is that any study of modern Ukrainian nation-building must consider the role of the eighteenth-

¹⁰ Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, 15–87.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 143–91.

¹² Ivan L. Rudnytsky, “The Role of the Ukraine in Modern History,” in *The Development of the USSR*, ed. Donald W. Treadgold (Seattle, 1964), 214.

century Ukrainian political unit called “Little Russia” by contemporaries, and subsequently labeled the “Hetmanate” by historians.

The Hetmanate’s origins can be traced to 1648, when Hetman Bohdan Khmel’nyts’kyi led the Zaporozhian army in a successful uprising against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and gained control over most of the Ukraine. In 1654, under the terms of the Pereiaslav agreement, Khmel’nyts’kyi placed Cossack Ukraine under the suzerainty of the Muscovite tsar. After a prolonged series of wars, the Right-Bank Ukraine was reincorporated into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but the Left Bank (east of the Dnieper) remained a separate political entity under the protection of the tsar. It is this truncated Left-Bank successor to the polity established by Khmel’nyts’kyi that is usually referred to as the Hetmanate. Although its autonomy was seriously curtailed after Hetman Ivan Mazepa’s alliance with Sweden (1709), the Hetmanate retained its own institutions until the 1780s, when it became subject to the Russian imperial administration.

During the Hetmanate’s long period of autonomy it developed a unique system of government which has close links to the military organization of the Cossack Host. The regiments and companies of the Zaporozhian army became attached to specific territories, and Cossack officers assumed administrative, judicial, and fiscal duties. The hetman, or leader, of the Cossacks and his staff functioned as a central government, whereas regimental and company officers became provincial and local administrators. The Cossack officials quickly solidified into a social stratum that in many respects resembled a landed nobility.¹³ I would argue that this elite underwent some of the stages in organic, pre-modern nation-building that resulted in the formation of a “Little Russian” identity.

¹³ See Chapter IV in my book *Making Ukraine: Studies On Political Culture, Historical Narrative, and Identity* (Toronto, 2011), 78–111; Aleksandra Efimenko, “Malorusskoe dvorianstvo i ego sud’ba,” in *Iuzhnaia Rus’: Ocherki, issledovaniia, i zametki*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1905), 1:145–200.

According to Marc Bloch, an important factor in Western nation-building was the elite's identification of a specific territory and people by a single name.¹⁴ In the Ukrainian case establishing such a name was particularly complex: as Mykola Kostomarov pointed out over a century ago, throughout history Ukrainians had used a multiplicity of names for self-identification.¹⁵ Terms used most frequently were "Rus'" "Little Russia" (*Mala Rus'*, *Mala Rossiia*, *Malorossia*), and "Ukraine" (*Ukraïna*). "Rus'" was, of course, the most ancient name originating with the Kyivan realm. It included the concept of "Rus'" territory, dynasty (the Rurikids), and church (the metropolitan of Kyiv and all Rus'). After the destruction of Kyiv by the Mongols (1240), Galicia-Volhynia and Suzdalia became the two major claimants to the Rus' tradition. Of primary importance in the struggle over the inheritance of legitimacy from Rus' was the residence of the metropolitan "of Kyiv and all Rus'." In 1301 the metropolitan moved from Kyiv to the Suzdal lands – first to Vladimir and then to Moscow. The Galician princes, insisted, however, that the metropolitan reside on their territory. Perhaps because of fears that the Galician-Volhynian principedom was tainted by close contacts with Catholic states, the ecumenical patriarch and the Greek prelates favored the north, but, under the impact of political events, relented and granted Galicia a Rus' metropolitan as well.

In order to distinguish the two metropolitans of Rus' the patriarch and the Greek prelates began to use the terms "Major Rus'" and "Minor Rus'."¹⁶ The reasons for choosing the terms remain obscure. They might simply have reflected that the Galician metropolitan had fewer eparchies than the Suzdal one, or they might have come about due to an ancient Greek practice of denoting the homeland as "minor" while the colonies were labelled as "major" (e.g., *Megalê*

¹⁴ Bloch, *Feudal Society*, 2:432–37.

¹⁵ Nikolai (Mykola) Kostomarov, "Dve russkii narodnosti," *Osnova*, no. 3 (March 1861): 40.

¹⁶ The best discussion of the terms "Rus'" and "Little Russia" is by A. Solov'ev in "Velikaia, Malaia i Belaia Rus'," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 7 (1947): 24–38.

Hellas, or *Magna Graecia* in Latin, for the Greek colonies in Italy). Whatever the conceptual underpinnings, the terms gained acceptance in ecclesiastical circles and entered the political sphere by the 1330s. Whereas the Galician princes utilized a number of variants of “Rus” in their titles, e.g., “Dux totius terrae Russiae,” “Dux et Dominus Russiae,” and even “Rex Russiae,” the last prince of Galicia, Iurii II Boleslav, on occasion also called himself “Dux totius Russiae Minoris.”¹⁷

As a political designation “Little Rus” faded with the demise of the Galician Principality (1340), but it continued to be important in the expanded battles over the Rus’ metropolitanate. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Poland, Lithuania, and Muscovy vied for metropolitanates of Rus’ and, at times, there were three Rus’ metropolitans at the same time. The ecumenical patriarch attempted to maintain one Rus’ church with one metropolitan of “Kyiv and all Rus’” residing primarily in Muscovy, but the political situation made this impossible. By the second half of the fifteenth century, the Rus’ church was not only divided into separate branches, but solidified into separate Eastern and Western churches. The Western Rus’ church under Lithuania was headed by the metropolitan of Kyiv and all Rus’, and the eastern Rus’ church was headed by the metropolitan of Moscow and all Rus’. Each church had its own organization and hierarchy, with the western Rus’ church still closely under the authority of the ecumenical patriarch. Since the Muscovite Rus’ church was no longer tied to Kyiv (even in the metropolitan’s title), the distinction between “Little Rus” and “Great Rus” was probably no longer necessary, for the term “Little Rus” disappeared by the latter part of the fifteenth century.¹⁸

During the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the term “Rus” underwent some changes

¹⁷ See the collection of essays, *Boleslav-Iurii II: Kniaz’ vsei Maloi Rusi* (St. Petersburg, 1907); see also Ia. Isaievyeh, “On the Titulature of Rulers in Eastern Europe,” in *Synopsis: A Collection of Essays in Honour of Zenon E. Kohut*, special issue of the Journal of Ukrainian Studies, ed. S. Plokhly and F. Sysyn (Edmonton and Toronto) 29, nos. 1–2 (Summer–Winter 2004): 219–44.

¹⁸ Solov’ev, “Velikaia, Malaia i Belaia Rus’,” 33.

in meaning and spelling. Its use was retained in civil affairs of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (*Rus'*, *Russia*, *Rus'ke kniazhestvo*). Thus for both Ukrainians and Poles, “Rus’” meant the people and land of the Ukraine and Belorussia, although by the early seventeenth century more often specifically of the Ukraine. To the east existed “Muscovy” and the “Muscovites.” However, in ecclesiastical circles, under the influence of revived Greek learning, “Rus’” was gradually replaced by “Rossiia.” In the late sixteenth century, the metropolitan of Kyiv began calling himself metropolitan of all “Rossiia.” As is clear from the texts, at that time “Rossiia” referred only to the Orthodox lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and not Muscovy. But under the Uniate challenge, Orthodox prelates began to seek support from the tsar of the other Rus’ or “Rossiia” – Muscovy – and reintroduced the old term “Mala Rus’,” now spelled “Malaia Rossiia.” The term gained greater currency after the restoration of the Orthodox hierarchy in 1620.¹⁹

In addition to the various permutations of the word “Rus’,” the term “Ukraine” was also used to designate the land and people, as is attested in the chronicle literature from the thirteenth century. Usually it referred to the borderlands of both the Kyiv and Galician principalities. That meaning persisted through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but then the term “Ukraine” was used to refer to the southeastern borderland of Poland-Lithuania. It was this middle Dnieper region which, as the frontier between Islam and Christianity, gave rise to the Cossack phenomenon. Soon “Ukraine” became virtually synonymous with the land of the Cossacks. The Cossacks referred to “Ukraine” as their “fatherland” or their “mother,” and as the Cossack movement expanded geographically so the term “Ukraine” began to be applied to a larger and larger territory. The term was accepted by Western cartographers, who designated the land as

¹⁹ The transformation of the term “Rus’” into “Rossiia” and then “Malorossiia” is best summarized by M. A. Maksimovich, “Ob upotreblenii nazvanii Rossiia i Malorossiia v Zapadnoi Rusi,” in *Sobranie sochinenii*, 2 vols. (Kyiv, 1877), 2:307–311.

“Ukraina que est terra Cossacorum.”²⁰

The successful Khmel’nyts’kyi uprising not only brought the Cossacks from the Ukraine’s borderlands to its heartland, but also resulted in the creation of a new polity that needed a name. Officially, Khmel’nyts’kyi’s polity was called “the Zaporozhian Army,” which hardly resolved the question of what country, territory, or people were under the army’s control. The attempts by contemporaries to deal with this problem reflect the varied political orientations and diffused identities of the period. “Rus’,” “Ukraine,” “Little Russia (Malorossiiia),” “Zaporozhian Army,” and “Cossacks” were all used singly or in various combinations to designate the new entity and its inhabitants. Hetman Vyhovs’kyi in negotiations with the Swedes wrote about our “ancient Ukraine or Rus’,” and Hetman Doroshenko in a letter referred to our “Orthodox Russian Ukrainian people.”²¹ Perhaps the chronicler Samiilo Velychko best exemplified the terminological overabundance of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, for he used virtually interchangeably all the following terms: “Cossack Russian Ukraine,” “Cossack Ukraine,” “Little Russian Ukraine,” “Little Russia,” and “Zaporozhian Host.”²²

In the eighteenth century, the term *Malorossiiia*, or “Little Russia,” gradually displaced all others, although *Ukraina* was still used on occasion. “Little Russia” received official approbation when after the Pereiaslav agreement (1654), the tsar changed his title from “tsar of all Rus’” to “tsar of Great and Little Russia.”²³ After over a half-century of use by Muscovite authorities, it was accepted by Ukrainian society as the usual term for the Hetmanate. Thus, “Little Russia” began to be identified not with all Ukraine but primarily with the Hetmanate of both banks of the

²⁰ There is an extensive literature concerning the term “Ukraine.” The best analysis of the historical evolution of the term is provided by Serhii Shelukhyn, *Ukraina – nazva nashoi zemli z naidavniishykh chasiv* (Prague, 1936), and V. Sichyns’kyi, *Nazva Ukrainy* (Augsburg, 1948).

²¹ These examples are taken from *Entsyklopediia ukrainoznavstva*, 3 vols. (Munich, 1949), 1:15.

²² For a listing of Velychko’s varied terminology, see Shelukhyn, *Ukraina*, 145–50.

²³ *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1830), doc. 119, 325.

Dnipro and then with its truncated Left-Bank successor in the eighteenth century. Yet the elite considered this “Little Russia” to be their fatherland – a special land that they were bound to cherish and protect. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Ukrainian elite had identified a specific people, territory, and political structure with a distinct name.²⁴

The development of a specific Little Russian identity was further bolstered by the concept of “Little Russian rights and liberties.” Contemporary sources often repeated the formula that as a “free people” (*vol’nyi narod*) the Little Russians had entered into voluntary agreements with the Polish king and later with the Muscovite tsar while always retaining their “rights and liberties” (*prava i vol’nosti*). The nature of these rights was imprecise, reflecting their diverse origins and the ambiguity of the Pereiaslav agreement and its subsequent revisions. At Pereiaslav, the hetman had acted as a Cossack commander, as a leader of a country, as a representative of the major social groups, and as a patron of the Orthodox religion. As a result, the tsar had become the protector of the Zaporozhian army, the Little Russian land, the principal social groups, and the Orthodox faith. “Little Russian rights and liberties,” therefore, included a mixture of sometimes contradictory socioeconomic, political and religious prerogatives. The Ukrainian populace expected the tsar not only to protect Little Russia from foreign invasion, but also to uphold these same “rights and liberties.”²⁵

While the major segments of Ukrainian society believed that they had some sort of reciprocal agreement with the tsar, none was ever recognized by the tsarist authorities. From the Muscovite point of view, “Little Russian rights and liberties” were gifts of the tsar and could be rescinded at his will. Moreover, the tsar claimed Little Russia not only on the basis of the

²⁴ By the middle of the eighteenth century, official documents (both Russian and Ukrainian), political and historical works, and even correspondence refer to the Hetmanate simply as “Little Russia.”

²⁵ A general description of Little Russian “rights and liberties” can be found in my book *Russian Centralism and Ukrainian Autonomy: Imperial Absorption of the Hetmanate, 1760s–1830s* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988).

submission at Pereiaslav in 1654, but as a hereditary land of Kyivan Rus' – a claim facilitated by the theory of the transfer of princely seats advanced by Muscovite and some Ukrainian prelates.²⁶ Nevertheless, the tsar did reconfirm and amend “Little Russian rights and liberties” each time a new hetman assumed office.²⁷ Thus, the tsar may have considered “Little Russia” as his patrimony, but de facto he recognized it as a special patrimony inhabited by privileged subjects.

The practical arrangement between the autocratic tsar and privileged Little Russian society changed significantly during the reign of Peter I. Perhaps the most dramatic innovation was the concept, as yet perceived only dimly, of the state as an entity separate from the tsar's patrimony. Ultimately, this outlook ascribed to the newly emerging Russian Empire a will and purpose of its own, and Peter would create an expanded and reinvigorated government machinery to serve it. This bureaucracy was to regulate the activities of the inhabitants in order to increase revenue, power, and glory for the state, but also to contribute to the common welfare. The inhabitants were no longer merely subjects or “slaves” of the tsar, but also servants of the state. Thus, Peter put Russia on the road to a goal-oriented, centrally regulated, absolutist monarchy – a type of “well-regulated” state which had emerged in eighteenth-century Central Europe.²⁸

²⁶ See Jarosław Pelenski, “The Origins of the Official Muscovite Claims to the ‘Kyivan Inheritance,’” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 1, no. 1 (March 1977): 29–52. The *Synopsis* is analyzed by I. P. Ieremin, “K istorii obshchestvennoi mysli na Ukraine vtoroi poloviny XVII v,” *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury* 10 (1954): 212–22, and by S. L. Peshtich, “‘Sinopsis’ kak istoricheskoe proizvedenie,” *ibid.* 15 (1958): 284–98.

²⁷ A. Iakovliv, *Ukraïns'ko-moskovs'ki dohovory v XVII–XVIII vikakh*, Pratsi Ukraïns'koho naukovooho instytutu, 19 (Warsaw, 1934).

²⁸ The gradual emergence of a state concept in seventeenth-century Muscovy is traced by G. Stökl, “Die Begriffe Reich, Herrschaft und Staat bei den orthodoxen Slaven,” *Saeculum* 5, no. 1 (1954): 104–117; Peter I's emerging concepts of state are also noted by Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (New York, 1974), 127–28; Peter's emulation of the “ordered” or “regulated” state has been proposed by V. I. Syromiantnikov, *‘Reguliarnoe gosudarstvo’ Petra Pervogo i ego ideologija* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1943). The whole question of the “well-ordered” state has been studied by Marc Raeff in “The Well-Ordered Police State and the Development of Modernity in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth- Century Europe: An Attempt at a Comparative Approach,” *American Historical Review* 30, no. 5 (December 1975): 1221–43; and in his *The Well-Ordered Police State: Social and*

A clash between the concept of a centrally regulated empire and the idea of Little Russian “rights and liberties” was inevitable. Little Russian society had no loyalty to the Russian state, yet believed the tsar to be its protector. Peter’s reforms and centralizing tendencies exasperated the Cossack elite until, finally, Hetman Ivan Mazepa decided to end the tsar’s protection over Little Russia (1709). Peter I, however, saw this change of allegiance not as a personal rebuke or betrayal, but as treason to the Russian state. It was clear that Peter considered the Hetmanate an integral (if not yet integrated) part of the Russian Empire.²⁹

It was the newly emerging imperial concept, coupled with internal developments in the Hetmanate that sparked the crystallization of the Little Russian identity. The social basis for that identity was the new elite that emerged in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, after the Poltava debacle. In essence, this small stratum of Cossack officers had developed into a gentry and saw itself as comparable to the nobility of the Polish times, or *szlachta*. Indeed, many Cossack officers “traced” their origins to the pre-1648 *szlachta*. Thus the descendants of the rebels against the *szlachta* Commonwealth, after solidifying as a gentry, turned to the political and estate traditions of the *szlachta* estate as a model for the Hetmanate. Such identification received tacit legal recognition in the compendium of laws produced in the 1740s, the “Laws by Which the Little Russian People are Judged,” and in the restoration of *szlachta* judicial courts in 1763 and 1764. But above all, the *szlachta* tendencies contributed to the new gentry’s political outlook. According to the constitutional theory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the *szlachta* was the sole component of the political nation and thus was responsible for the country’s rights, privileges, and current needs (expressed through the Diet). In the Hetmanate,

Institutional Change through Law in the Germanies and Russia, 1600–1800 (New Haven, 1983).

²⁹ See O. Subtelny, “Mazepa, Peter I, and the Question of Treason,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 2, no. 2 (June 1978): 158–83, and his “Russia and the Ukraine: The Difference that Peter Made,” *Russian Review* 39, no. 1 (January 1980): 1–17.

the recently established *szlachta* also began to assume the role of the defender of Little Russia, its constitutional arrangement, and its social structure – in short, to imitate somewhat a *szlachta* political nation.³⁰

The institutional forum for the elite's political role was the Officers' Council. Meeting during the Christmas and Easter holidays, it evolved from an informal gathering of officers, expressing holiday felicitations to the hetman, into a more elaborate and formal body with elected regional participants and a prescribed agenda.³¹ For example, the 1763 council was attended by 100 middle- and high-ranking notables, representing all regions of the Hetmanate. The council adopted a program of administrative and judicial reforms, outlined an economic policy, and requested the tsar to confirm the rights of various social groups, particularly the *szlachta*. The council's discussions and the resulting petition to the tsar also gave a good indication of the elite's political views. Clearly, they viewed Little Russia as a separate country, possessing its own borders, government, and institutions. Admittedly, Little Russia was connected to Russia by a common monarch, but the council reminded the Russian authorities that the submission to the tsar was based on treaties and recommended that the tsar again reconfirm the Pereiaslav agreement – a custom which had been abolished by Peter I.³²

The rejection of the centralized Russian state was expressed explicitly in a political poem *Rozgovor Velikorossii s Malorossiei* (A Dialogue Between Great Russia and Little Russia), written in 1762 by an official in the Hetmanate, Semen Divovych. The poem was dedicated to the “honor, glory, and defense of all Little Russia.”³³ Such Little Russian patriotism was further

³⁰ Kohut, “Ukrainian Elite,” 65–97.

³¹ On the evolution of the Officers' Council, see Lev Okinshevych, *Tsentral'ni ustanovy Ukrainy-Het'manshchyny XVII–XVIII vv.*, pt. 2: *Rada starshyn*, Pratsi Komisii dlia vyvchannia istorii zakhidn'o-rus'koho ta ukrains'koho prava, 8 (Kyiv, 1930).

³² Kohut, *Russian Centralism*, 86–95.

³³ A. V. Petrov, ed., “Rozgovor Velikorossii s Malorossiei: Literaturnyi pamiatnik vtoroi poloviny XVIII veka,” *Kyivskaia starina* (hereafter – *KS*), no. 2 (1882): 313–65.

reinforced by a historical consciousness present in a relatively new literary genre – the Cossack chronicle. At a time when most literature was produced by churchmen, the Cossack chronicles were written by the clerks and officials of the Ukrainian civil administration.³⁴

The emergence of a historical consciousness, the expression of political loyalty to Little Russia and its constitutional and administrative prerogatives, and the clear identification of the people and territory with the term “Little Russia” all indicate that by the mid-eighteenth century the Ukrainian elite had undergone some of the stages of pre-modern nation-building. If a pre-modern Little Russian nation had not as yet matured, then, at the very least, the elite had shown a strong Little Russian identity – an identity with the potential of serving as a focal point in forming a modern “Little Russian” nation. But the introduction of the Russian imperial concept – which had at first helped crystallize the Little Russian identity – now undermined its base. During the reign of Catherine II, the autonomous institutions of the Hetmanate were gradually abolished, the Ukrainian elite was brought into the Russian nobility, and the peasants were completely enserfed.³⁵ The disappearance of Little Russia as a distinct political and administrative entity deprived the elite of the major symbols of a distinct Little Russian identity.

The Ukrainian elite, of course, protested against the attempts to impose a uniform Russian imperial state. Approximately 950 Ukrainian nobles participating in Catherine II’s Legislative Commission signed petitions for the continuation of the Hetmanate’s autonomy (1767).³⁶ Political theorists such as Hryhorii Poletyka advanced several projects for reform which they hoped would both placate the imperial authorities and retain “Little Russian rights

³⁴ Cossack chronicles are discussed in my article “The Question of Russo-Ukrainian Unity and Ukrainian Distinctiveness in Early Modern Ukrainian Thought and Culture,” see my *Making Ukraine*, 1–35.

³⁵ Kohut, *Russian Centralism*, 209–58.

³⁶ For the Ukrainian elite’s participation in the Legislative Commission, see Kohut, *Russian Centralism*, 125–90.

and liberties.”³⁷ But these efforts were to no avail. The leveling of the Hetmanate’s institutions continued unabated. Moreover, the rights to Russian nobility, complete enserfment of the peasantry, and unprecedented opportunities for imperial careers had shown the Ukrainian elite some of the advantages of integration into the imperial system.

While the elimination of the Hetmanate’s institutions was undercutting the basis for a Little Russian identity, a gradual cultural transformation was bringing the Ukrainian elite into an imperial cultural milieu. Culturally, the Ukrainian gentry was directly or indirectly the product of the Kyiv Academy or its educational satellites – the Chemihiv and Kharkiv Collegia. At the beginning of the eighteenth century a graduate of these schools would have a good knowledge of Latin, Polish, a Ukrainian rendition of Church Slavonic, Slavono-Ukrainian (a mixture of Slavonic and Ukrainian), and, perhaps, a smattering of classical Greek or of German. Latin and Polish were the elite’s window to world culture; Slavonic served not only as a sacred language, but was considered appropriate for use in high literary genres such as drama. Slavono-Ukrainian – in various combinations and forms – was the most extensively used linguistic medium, prevailing in the world of officialdom, in personal correspondence, and in literary genres such as poetry, drama, sermons, and oratorical works. Colloquial Ukrainian was reserved for *interludia* and *intermedia* – humorous skits performed between the acts of serious drama.³⁸

In Russia, an adaption of Ukrainian Slavonic largely replaced the Muscovite version by

³⁷ See my article “A Gentry Democracy Within an Autocracy: The Politics of Hryhorii Poletyka (1723/25–1784),” *Eucharisterion: Essays Presented to Omeljan Pritsak by His Students and Colleagues on His Sixtieth Birthday* = *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3/4 (1979–80), 2:507–519.

³⁸ For information on the elite’s education, see Oleksander Hrushevs’kyi, “Zminy shkil’noi systemy na Livoberezhzhi v XVIII v.,” *Ukraïna*, 1924, nos. 1–2, 82–87; for changes in literary production, language, and culture in the eighteenth century, see P. Zhitetskii, “‘Eneida’ Kotliarevskogo i drevneishii spisok ee v sviazi s obzorom maloruskoï literatury XVIII veka, serialized in *KS*, no. 10 (1899): 1–30; no. 11, 127–66; no. 12, 277–300; 1900, no. 1, 16–45; no. 2, 163–91; no. 3, 312–36. For a discussion of the literary language, see George Y. Shevelov, “Evolution of the Ukrainian Literary Language,” in *Rethinking Ukrainian History*, ed. Ivan L. Rydnytsky (Edmonton, 1981), 216–31; M. A. Zhovtobriukh, “Davni tradytsii v novii ukraïns’kii literaturnii movi,” *Movoznavstvo*, no. 2 (1970): 24–40; P. P. Pliushch, *Istoriia ukraïns’koï literaturnoi movy* (Kyiv, 1971), 215–52; I. K. Bilodid, “Movna kontsepsiia Kyievo-Mohylians’koï Akademii,” in his *Kyievo-Mohylians’ka akademiia z istorii skhidnoslov’ians’kykh literaturnykh mov* (Kyiv, 1979), 48–84.

the early eighteenth century. This new version of Slavonic was cleansed of Ukrainianisms in vocabulary, but retained the Ukrainian version's structure and form of exposition.³⁹ At the same time, the Kyiv Academy was adopted as a model for Russian schools, which were frequently staffed by its graduates. By the mid-eighteenth century, Ukrainian clerics and monks assumed a very influential, if not dominant, position within the imperial Orthodox church.⁴⁰ The end result was the creation of a fairly unified Slavonic Orthodox cultural milieu.

Outside the religious realm, Russia in the eighteenth century made giant strides in the development of a modern literary Russian language and secular Russian literary culture. At the turn of the century, the Russian literary scene was somewhat analogous to the situation in the Ukraine. Literary works were written in an admixture of Slavonic, chancery Muscovite, and colloquial Russian. The "higher" the genre, the closer it came to Slavonic. Mikhail Lomonosov's theory of three styles allowed more genres to be produced in a middle style, in a linguistic medium that was developing into literary Russian.⁴¹ The process of forming modern literary Russian was facilitated by the publication of grammars and dictionaries. Also, the civil alphabet introduced by Peter I sharpened the distinction between church and civil linguistic forms. The state became the publisher of the printed word and the promoter of secular Russian culture.⁴²

The imperial development of language, literature, and culture had a profound impact on the Ukraine. In 1721 a Petrine decree permitted monasteries in the Ukraine to publish only religious works, and then only in linguistic conformity with Russian imperial norms. Because there was no secular typography in the Hetmanate, the decree in effect reduced whole genres of Ukrainian literature to a manuscript tradition.⁴³ Moreover, under the impact of daily intercourse,

³⁹ V. Vinogradov, *Ocherki po istorii russkogo literaturnogo iazyka XVII–XIX v.v.* (Leiden, 1949), 17–27.

⁴⁰ K. Kharlampovich, *Malorossiiskoe vliianie na velikorusskuiu tserkovnuiu zhizn'* (Kazan, 1914).

⁴¹ Vinogradov, *Ocherki*, 95–119.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 72–84; James Cracraft, *The Revolution of Peter the Great* (Cambridge, Mass., 2003).

⁴³ Zhitetskii, "Eneida," *KS*, no. 10 (1899): 6–30.

the chancery Slavono-Ukrainian was being gradually replaced by Slavono-Russian (although on the local level a Ukrainian chancery language was in use until the nineteenth century). As more and more literary, scientific, and practical works were becoming available in Russian, the developing literary Russian language replaced Polish as the medium of contact for the Ukrainian elite with the outside world. All these changes signified the gradual demise of literary Slavono-Ukrainian, so much so that by the 1780s, it fell out of use at the Kyiv Academy and was replaced by Russian.⁴⁴

Much had changed if one compares the cultural world of a typical Ukrainian nobleman at the beginning and at the end of the eighteenth century. Both would still learn a good deal of Church Slavonic, but whereas at the beginning of the century several high genres were written in Slavonic, by the end Slavonic was relegated strictly to the religious realm. Both nobles would have a working knowledge of Latin with a smattering of classical Greek. By 1800, however, the Slavono-Ukrainian used extensively in administration and literature in 1700 had been replaced by Slavono-Russian – a language which was evolving into a standard literary Russian. This language was further reinforced by a vigorous imperial publication program which produced works dealing with all aspects of the secular world, from practical manuals to translations of foreign literature. In fact, the emerging literary Russian language also replaced Polish as the medium for contact with the non-Orthodox world. Contact with the West was further strengthened by an increased knowledge of German and, by the end of the century, of French.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the Ukrainian elite fit well into the imperial cultural milieu. Since many Ukrainian nobles still learned their letters from the Slavonic Psalter and other sacred texts, Slavonic or “bookish” Russian sounded both learned and native. For the Ukrainian gentry, the replacement of Slavono-Ukrainian with Slavono-Russian or simply Russian was so

⁴⁴ Ibid., no. 11 (1899): 129–35.

gradual that it was barely perceived. It meant the displacement of one unspoken “book language” by another, while the Slavonic component provided continuity. It is true that colloquial Ukrainian could still be used for “low-style” genres, particularly for travesties and humor. This was not insignificant, for it was precisely from such low-style humor that modern Ukrainian literature was born (Ivan Kotliarevs’kyi, author of the first published modern Ukrainian literary work, was a nobleman from the Hetmanate). But for the Ukrainian gentry this was mere local humor and color. They could not conceive of the language spoken by the people as a medium for high culture. By the end of the eighteenth century they shared in an imperial high culture that was both cosmopolitan and Russian.

Immersion into a cosmopolitan Russian cultural milieu did not preclude the existence of a very strong Little Russian patriotism. The Little Russian identity combined Russian imperial culture with an attachment to the Hetmanate and its institutions. Vasyl’ Kapnist (Vasiliï Kapnist) is a good example of the Little Russian identity at the end of the eighteenth century. A well-known imperial literary figure who wrote in Russian, he also advanced a project to restore the Hetmanate’s Cossack formations and was an ardent defender of the few remaining Little Russian prerogatives. It is almost certain that Kapnist held secret talks with the Prussian king, seeking Prussia’s support for a reconstituted Little Russia.⁴⁵ While others were not as extreme in their devotion, efforts at either preserving or restoring some of the Hetmanate’s institutions persisted through the first half of the nineteenth century. Occasionally, these traditionalists met with

⁴⁵ On V. Kapnist’s activities on behalf of the Hetmanate, see O. Ohloblyn, *Liudy Staroi Ukraïny* (Munich, 1959), 49–114. For the debate over Kapnist’s secret talks with the Prussian king, see William B. Edgerton, “Laying a Legend to Rest: The Poet Kapnist and Ukraino-German Intrigue,” *Slavic Review* 30, no. 3 (September 1971): 551–60; and O. Ohloblyn, “Berlins’ka misiia Kapnista 1791 roku: Istoriohrafiiia i metodolohiia pytannia,” *Ukraïns’kyi istoryk*, 1974, nos. 1–3, 85–103. Bronisław Dembiński, “Tajna misja Ukraïńca w Berlinie w r. 1791,” *Przegląd Polski* 3 (1896): 511–23; Mykhailo Hrushevsky, “Sekretna misiia ukraïntsia v Berlini v 1791,” *Zapysky Naukovoho tovarystva im. Shevchenko* 9 (1896): Miscellanea, 7–9; Georg Sacke, “V. V. Kapnist und seine Ode ‘Na rabstvo,’” *Zeitschrift für slavische Philologie* 7 (1941): 291–301; Oleksander Ohloblyn, “Berlins’ka misiia Kapnista 1791 roku: Istoriohrafiiia i metodolohiia pytannia,” *Ukraïns’kyi istoryk*, nos. 1–3 (1974): 85–103; Ia. Dashkevych, “Berlin, kviten’ 1791 r.: Misiia V. V. Kapnista, ii peredistoriia ta istoriia,” *Ukraïns’kyi arkheohrafichnyi shchorichnyk* 1 (1992): 220–59.

limited success. Emperor Paul I partially restored the Hetmanate's judicial system; the Lithuanian Statute survived as the basic law code until 1843; and the Hetmanate's inheritance and property laws were in use until the Russian Revolution.⁴⁶

The few surviving native legal practices, however, were hardly sufficient for the preservation of a strong Little Russian identity. With the possibility of restoring the Hetmanate's major institutions waning, patriots were reduced to bemoaning Little Russia's fate in manuscript tracts. The most influential political work produced in the early nineteenth century was *Istoriia Rusov* (History of the Rus'). Written anonymously in Russian and falsely attributed to a deceased writer, it was a thoroughly modern apology for Little Russia and its rights and liberties. Here Little Russia is portrayed as a major power in Eastern Europe, whose destruction had upset the balance of power. The author was well acquainted with the ideas emanating from the American and French Revolutions, as well as concepts of natural law and the balance of power. Implicit in the work is the hope that Little Russia would be restored to its rightful place in the family of nations. It also shows a new interest in the question of national terminology, arguing that the Russians had stolen the name "Rus'" from the Ukrainians.⁴⁷

In the process of decrying Little Russia's fate, the patriots recorded it. From the time of the Hetmanate's abolition in the 1780s until the 1830s, the Ukrainian gentry compiled and published topographical descriptions, genealogies, local histories, family archives, and several works of synthesis.⁴⁸ But this surge in historical consciousness did not reflect a further development of the Little Russian identity, but rather a belief in its imminent demise. The abolition of the institutions of the Hetmanate convinced many Little Russian patriots that they

⁴⁶ Kohut, *Russian Centralism*, 234–37.

⁴⁷ *Istoriia Rusiv*, ed. O. Ohloblyn (New York, 1956).

⁴⁸ Dmytro Doroshenko, *A Survey of Ukrainian Historiography* (special issue of the *Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the U.S.*, 5–6 [New York, 1957]): 92–116.

were epigones of a country and a nation that had ceased to exist. Oleksa Martos captured this mood in his diary while visiting the grave of Hetman Mazepa in Moldavia in 1812:

Mazepa died far away from his country, whose independence he defended. He was a friend of liberty and therefore deserves to be honored by posterity. After his expulsion from Little Russia, its inhabitants lost their sacred rights, which Mazepa had defended for so long with great enthusiasm and patriotic ardor. He is no more, and the name of Little Russia and its brave Cossacks have disappeared from the list of nations who, although small in numbers, are yet famous for their way of life and their constitution. Now rich Little Russia is reduced to two or three provinces. That this is the common destiny of states and republics, we can see from the history of other nations.⁴⁹

Such was the peculiar fate of the Little Russian identity. Rather than evolve into a modern Little Russian national consciousness, the Little Russian identity was gradually channeled into a peculiar *Landespatriotismus* that lamented the demise of a Little Russian “nation.”

What, then, was the role of the Little Russian identity in the process of Ukrainian nation-building? If viewed in terms of a direct linear development, the emergence of a Little Russian identity was merely a pale and ultimately aborted reflection of the West European nation-building model. However, if one considers national development as a dialectical rather than linear process, then the emergence of a Little Russian identity can be considered an important step in Ukrainian nation-building. With their antiquarian interests and nostalgia, the Ukrainian gentry preserved at least a remnant of the Little Russian identity until the 1830s and 1840s. At the same time, under the influence of Herder and romanticism, a new generation discovered the Ukrainian folk with its vernacular language. Young students came to identify themselves by the term “Ukrainian,” which to them signified a cultural rather than a political affiliation.⁵⁰

For a while, the apolitical researchers of Ukrainian folk language and customs and the

⁴⁹ Doroshenko, *A Survey of Ukrainian Historiography*, 77.

⁵⁰ For an overview of the activities of the early ethnographers, see Boris P. Kirdan, *Sobirateli narodnoi poezii: Iz istorii ukrainskoi fol'kloristiki XIX v.* (Moscow, 1974); an anthology of the literature was compiled by Ia. Aizenshtok, *Ukrains'ki poety-romantyky 20–40kh rokiv XIX st.* (Kyiv, 1968).

nostalgic Little Russian descendants of the elite of the former Hetmanate could pursue their activities without much contact. But after a time they inevitably clashed. The author of *Istoriia Rusov*, in writing this modernized swan song of the Little Russian identity, already witnessed the reemergence of the term “Ukraine” and fired a salvo against it.⁵¹ It was a clash of generations (fathers versus sons) and social groups (gentry versus newly-formed intelligentsia) over language (Russian versus Ukrainian) and orientation (restoration of Little Russian institutions versus apolitical Ukrainian cultural work). This clash helped spark modern Ukrainian nation-building because the intelligentsia of the 1840s combined Ukrainian cultural activities with the political outlook and historical consciousness that had been part of the Little Russian identity.⁵²

But only a part of the gentry and intelligentsia accepted the new Ukrainian national identity. With its Russian cultural base, the Little Russian identity also prepared its adherents for the All-Russian concept which postulated that the Little Russians were a branch of a single Russian nation. In fact, D. B. Saunders has argued that the “Little Russians” were the first to raise the question of Russia’s own national identity. He claims that these Ukrainians played a substantial part in defining Russian *narodnost’* and prepared the ground for Slavophilism – thus making a major contribution to imperial ideology and Russian nationalism.⁵³

In conclusion, the Little Russian legacy played an ambiguous role in the Ukrainian nation-building process. On the one hand, the ability of the Ukrainian intelligentsia to draw upon the traditions of the Hetmanate meant that the process did not have to begin at a virtual *Naturvolk* stage. Thus, a Ukrainian movement could emerge sooner and with greater vitality than

⁵¹ *Istoriia Rusiv*, 4–5.

⁵² In my view, N. (M.) Kostomarov, M. Maksymovych, and P. Kulish exemplify such a synthesis. For a study of the Ukrainian intelligentsia of the 1830s and 1840s, see Orest Pelech, “Toward a Historical Sociology of the Ukrainian Ideologues in the Russian Empire of the 1830’s and 1840’s” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1976).

⁵³ D. B. Saunders, “Contemporary Critics of Gogol’s *Vechera* and the Debate about Russian *narodnost’* (1831–1832),” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 5, no. 1 (March 1981): 66–82; and his *The Ukrainian Impact on Russian Culture, 1750–1850* (Edmonton, 1985).

national movements in Belorussia or Slovakia, for example. On the other hand, the Russian cultural component of the Little Russian identity made the Ukrainian intelligentsia hesitant and suspicious when incorporating its political and historical traditions into a new Ukrainian outlook. It was even more difficult for the Little Russian gentry to accept the new Ukrainian identity, because it was based on the language and culture of their serfs. For many of the gentry and intelligentsia, the competing identities – imperial, all-Russian, Russian, and even Slavic – were ultimately more attractive than the Ukrainian one. In this respect, the lingering Little Russian identity which initially stimulated the Ukrainian national movement hampered its further development once the movement was underway. Yet, despite that contradictory role, the development of a Little Russian identity was a prelude for modern Ukrainian nation-building.