

Cossack Officials in Sloboda Ukraine: from Local Elite to Imperial Nobility?

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Abstract: This article explores the history of a boundary region in Eastern Ukraine known as Sloboda Ukraine (Slobozhanshchyna). Its origins can be traced back to the mid-17th century, when mass Ukrainian migrations from the Dnieper banks eastward resulted in the establishment of five Cossack regiments – Ostrohoz'k, Kharkiv, Okhtyrka, Sumy and Izium. The Cossack officials soon constituted themselves as a local oligarchy. They concentrated power and wealth in their hands and became closely connected through intermarriage. They adapted a noble outlook as attested to by the practice of using coats of arms. Being formally separated, Sloboda Ukraine Cossack regiments were politically influenced by the Hetmanate. In the second half of the 18th century, the Russian empire resorted to the intensified centralization, integration and unification of national peripheries into one imperial body. Under the pressure of reforms, introduced by the empress Catherine II and dictated by the ideas of Enlightened Absolutism the Cossacks' rights of autonomy were abolished. The long and painful political transformations paralleled the process of the incorporation of Cossack elites into the imperial nobility. In the case of Sloboda Ukraine, the social and economic privileges granted by Saint Petersburg to the Cossack officials happened to be the most effective integrative tool. However, at the beginning of the 19th century, the Cossack past, completely mythologized, served as an ideological foundation for modern Ukrainian national building.

Introduction

Interest in the history of empire as a historical phenomenon has accelerated in the last three decades. Among other topics, this has brought into focus social transformations caused by empires in their peripheries (Wilson 2004). In this light, the history of Ukraine during “the long nineteenth century” (as defined by Eric Hobsbaum) could be an interesting subject for investigation and broader comparison.

My paper deals with the controversial history of Sloboda Ukraine (*Slobozhanshchyna*), a boundary region in Eastern Ukraine. Its distinctive features are rooted in the mid-17th century, when migrants from Right- and Left-Bank Ukraine established Sloboda Ukraine Cossack regiments (*Slobids'ki polky*). Over the following hundred years of autonomous existence, a local social elite known as Cossack officialdom ruled *Slobozhanshchyna*. They concentrated political power and economic capacities in their hands but eventually lost their positions as soon as autonomy was abolished. Did they resist reforms? What kind of integrative strategy did the metropole employ toward them? Did the metropole achieve its goals? How did the transformations of the late 18th century affect the modern Ukrainian national building?

Historiography

There is a vast amount of literature on this topic, which includes various works on the history of Ukraine and the Russian empire. In general, it could be divided into three large groups, namely Ukrainian, Russian and Western studies of the problem. Below, I mention the most representative contributions.

In recent times, the history of the Ukrainian elite from the Kyivan Rus' period to the early 20th century has become a part of mainstream contemporary Ukrainian historiography. Princes from the Riuryk and Gediminas dynasties, gentry (*szlachta*), Cossack officials, and Ukrainian nobility have all attracted the attention of numerous scholars. In particular, the ruling estate of the pre-modern Ukrainian state (also known as the Cossack Host, the Hetmanate or *Viis'ko Zaporoz'ke*) with subordinated autonomy of the Lower Cossack Host (*Viis'ko Zaporoz'ke Nyzove*) has been researched by a group of historians associated mainly with the Institute of the History of Ukraine and the M. S. Hrushevsky Institute of Ukrainian Archaeography and Source Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (Brekhunenko 2014, Chukhlib 2009, Kryvosheia 2004, Mytsyk 2010, Stanislavsky 2002). In 2003, the Kharkiv historian Volodymyr Masliychuk published his pioneering monograph on the history of the Sloboda Ukrainian Cossack elite, entitled *The Cossack Officials of Sloboda Ukraine Regiments in the second half of 17th – the first third of 18th centuries* (Masliychuk 2003). Since then, genealogical, heraldic and military studies concerning the Sloboda have been published (Alfyorov 2009, Kornienko 2008, Mykhailichenko 2013, Odnorozhenko 2011).

With regards to Russian studies on the subject, three main categories can be identified. The first includes works on the history of the Russian nobility. This subject has a long and rich historiographic tradition dating back to the 19th century. Several modern historians such as Elena Marassinova, Irina Faizova, Olga Eliseeva and others have contributed to it (Eliseeva 2008, Glagoleva and Shierle 2008, Marassinova 2008, Petrukhintsev and Erren 2013, Faizova 1999). The writings devoted to the period of Enlightened Absolutism in the Russian empire make up the second category. Here, the most prominent monographs are by Yevgenii Anisimov, Nikolai Pavlenko, Aleksandr Kamensky and Oleg Omelchenko (Anisimov 2011, Kamensky 1999, Omelchenko 1993, Pavlenko 2003). Finally, there are

also a number of works exploring the imperial peripheries and national groups (Abashyn, Arapov and Bekmakhanova 2008, Berezhnaia, Budnicki and Dolbilov 2006, Minkina 2011).

Among the works written by scholars from Western Europe and North America, the renowned monograph by the Austrian historian Andreas Kappeler, *Rußland als Vielvölkerreich: Entstehung – Geschichte – Zerfall*, is of special importance (Kappeler 1992). The French researcher Daniel Beauvois has devoted several books to the history of the Polish *szlachta* under Russian rule (Beauvois 2011). It is also important to mention two books by the American historians Mark Raeff (*Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia: The Eighteenth-Century Nobility*) and Robert E. Jones (*The Emancipation of the Russian Nobility: 1762–1785*) (Raeff 1966, Jones 1973). The history of Ukrainian Cossackdom has a strong historiographic tradition in Western academia, as represented by the famous works by Zenon E. Kohut, Frank E. Sysyn and Serhii Plokhy (Kohut 1988, Sysyn 1985, Plokhy 2012).

Source Base

The primary sources for this paper come from Ukrainian and Russian archives. At the first stage of research, I used the documents from the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Kyiv, which contains documents of the local administration of Sloboda Ukraine and collections of the family papers of Ukrainian aristocrats.[1] One set of particularly valuable documents includes the records of Sloboda Ukraine Cossack officials, namely the *Annual Lists* (1757–1764), the *Nominal Lists* (1765), the *Registers of Cossack Officials' Children* (1765–1766) and the *Registers of Cossack Officials and Their Children* (1766–1767). These sources make it possible to determine the number, structure, personal information, social and ethnic composition, age data and educational features of Cossack officials (Potapenko, *Elita*).

A huge epistolary collection of the Sloboda Ukraine elite, dating primarily from the 19th century, is preserved in the Institute of Manuscripts of the Volodymyr Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine (Kyiv). Based on the papers from collection I, *Historical Materials*, and collection II, *Correspondence*, I have reconstructed the domestic archive of the Krasovsky Ukrainian noble family. In my estimation, this archive was accumulated over the period from the early 18th to the early 20th centuries. The complete documental assemblage consisted of two smaller archives possessed by the allied family branches in the Chernihiv region and Sloboda Ukraine. Most papers recorded the Krasovskys' property rights and confirmed their high social status (Potapenko, *Famil'nyi*).

In Moscow, I have explored the collections of four archives. Firstly, the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts, which houses the funds of central governmental institutions of the Tsardom of Moscow and the Russian Empire. For me, the most useful were the funds of internal affairs and the personal funds of Catherine II, where I examined reports from Sloboda Ukraine governors, orders given by the empress, and documents circulated between the *guberniia* office and the Governing Senate.[2] I also examined the unique documents of the *General Land Survey (Generalnoe mezhevanie)*, one of Catherine II's most ambitious undertakings.[3]

Secondly, in the Russian State Military Historical Archive I studied the lists of hussar regiments stationed in Sloboda Ukraine in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.[4] In the Collection of Manuscripts of the Russian State Library two funds were of interest – the collection of *Diary Notes* of the Legislative Commission of 1766–1769 and the family papers of the Panins, a Russian aristocratic family[5]. In the State Archive of the Russian Federation, where sources on modern history are kept, the files of a criminal case from the 1850s–1860s concerning Andrii Krasovsky’s anti-government activity were analysed. [6]

In Saint Petersburg, I have examined the records of two institutions: the Russian State Historical Archive and the Manuscripts Department of the National Library of Russia. The former preserves the fullest collection of Books of Nobility of the Russian empire. These books were introduced in keeping with Catherine II’s 1785 Charter to the Nobility. Since that time, registration in the Book of Nobility of a particular *guberniia* was the only legal evidence of one’s noble status.

Membership among the nobility had to be registered in the Book of Nobility that was compiled by the Association of Nobles in each *guberniia*. Anyone wanting to establish his nobility was required to present the evidence on which his claim was based to a committee composed of the *guberniia* marshal and one deputy elected by the nobles of each region (*uezd*). According to Section Four of the Charter, the following were to be recognized as proof of nobility: a charter, diploma, or patent of nobility issued in the name of the tsar or his government; evidence that the man in question or one of his ancestors had served the state in some capacity that implied nobility; evidence of membership in a group, e.g. senior civil servants, that had been ennobled *en masse* by royal decree; evidence that a direct ancestor had been given a noble estate by the crown; evidence that one’s father or grandfather had owned populated villages; or testimony by twelve noble witnesses that one’s father and grandfather had been accepted as equals by nobleman of the region. If the marshal and the deputies found an applicant’s credentials unconvincing, they were to return them with a written explanation and deny him registration in the Book of Nobility until such time as he could provide satisfactory documentation. If they accepted his evidence, on the other hand, they were to give him a certificate verifying his status as a nobleman and enroll him and his family in the appropriate section of the Book of Nobility (Jones 277–278).

Each Book includes six sections, differentiated by the means of being ennobled (whether hereditary or through state service), the length of the family’s standing, and the honour of the enrolled families. Those who had received membership in the nobility within the last one hundred years through the personal grant of the monarch were to be listed in the first category; those who had acquired it through military service were to be listed in the second category; and those who had acquired it through civil service were to be listed in the third. Families whose nobility was of foreign origin were to be listed in the fourth category; those entitled to use the titles prince, count, and baron were to be listed in the fifth; and those whose nobility had been established for more than a century were to be entered in the sixth. The six-fold division of the nobility allowed nobles whose families were entered

in one of the latter three categories to continue to believe that they were the “true” nobility and families entered in one of the first three sections were their social inferiors (Jones 276–277).

I have studied the complete six-section Book of Nobility of the Sloboda Ukraine *guberniia* for 1786–1796 and the Books of neighbouring Voronez, Kursk and Orlov *guberniias* for the same period.[7]

Finally, in the Manuscripts Department of the National Library of Russia, I discovered a collection of letters written by Sloboda Ukraine nobles in 1790s–1830s.[8] This sort of narrative source, together with family chronicles, memoirs and diaries, gives an intimate look at the everyday life of the noble milieu.

Sloboda Ukraine Cossack Officials: Prosopography

It is generally accepted in the historiography that Ukrainian Cossackdom emerged on the Ukrainian southern frontier in the late 15th century as a response to continuous Tatar attacks. In the mid-17th century, under the rule of hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky, the Cossacks led the Ukrainian War of Liberation against the Polish authorities and, resulting from this, formed the core of the elite of a pre-modern Ukrainian state.

The war and the following decades of instability (the so-called *Ruin*) intensified mass migrations from the Right- and Left-Bank Ukrainian lands eastward across the formal southern and western boundaries of the Tsardom of Moscow. During the second half of the 17th and beginning of the 18th century, Ukrainian Cossacks, along with the clergy, burghers and free peasantry, colonized the wide terrain of the so-called Wild Field (*Dyke Pole*). Nominally, the newly founded settlements were subordinate to the Moscow military and civil administration represented in situ by a Belgorod *voevoda* (warlord). Because the settlements were exempted from taxation for the first few years (or, in other words, were granted freedom – *svoboda* or *sloboda*), the region got the name of Sloboda Ukraine or *Slobozhanshchyna*.

Just as in the Hetmanate, in the Sloboda Ukraine system of Cossack administration, military in origin, was adapted to civil needs. Five Cossack regiments, namely those of Ostrohoz'k, Kharkiv, Okhtyrka, Sumy and Iziium (named after the major towns), were established. They served as military and administrative units and simultaneously embodied local political autonomy. In turn, tax-free alcohol production and trade were the principal economic liberties. These specific rights were fixed in the charters granted to Sloboda Ukraine Cossacks by the Moscow tsars in the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

At the same time, the position of central hetman was absent in Sloboda Ukraine. Each regiment was ruled by a particular regimental office (*polkova kanceliariia*), with a colonel as head. The corps of regimental officials included the regimental quartermaster, regimental senior and junior aides-de-camps, regimental judge, regimental captain, regimental senior and junior chancellor, and regimental standard-bearer (8 officers per regiment). Usually, a regiment was divided into 20–25 companies (*sotnia*) managed by company offices (*sotenna kanceliariia*) with the chief position of captain (*sotnyk*) and

company officials (company aide-de-camp, company chancellor, and company standard-bearer). A group of officers' assistants or "fellows of the banner" (*pidpraporni*) represented the lowest administrative level (40-45 per regiment).

The easiest way to calculate the number of the officials on current service in a particular year is to address the *Yearly Lists* (Potapenko, *Elita* 47–145). For instance, in 1762, 407 persons served, among them 5 colonels, 41 regimental officials, 125 captains and 236 fellows of the banner. Two *Nominal Lists* of 1765 (the latest records before autonomy was abolished) gives almost the same figures – 408 and 417 persons (Potapenko, *Elita* 164–290).

Meanwhile, the principle question discussed by Ukrainian historians concerns the social and national origins of Cossack officials and, consequently, their identities. In other words, the question is: were they true noblemen descended from the Ukrainian *szlachta* of the pre-Khmelnysky era? Alternatively, was their claim to noble origins baseless? These questions are crucial in the light of further integration of this social group into the Russian nobility.

To be sure, only scrupulous genealogical research focused on each family could give a clear answer. Unfortunately, such research is not possible in all cases as a result of the considerable documentary losses during the war and the Ruin. In fact, the Cossack officials themselves were aware of the lack of evidence for their noble claims. For instance, in early 1762 the Sloboda Ukraine offices got an order from the Governing Senate to compile the *Lists of Nobility* (*Spiski o Shliakhetstve*) for each regiment. The activity of Sumy and Okhtyrka officials remains unknown while the situation in three other regiments seems to be quite indicative. Ostrohoz'k officials enrolled themselves in the lists on the grounds that:

Being settled, the Sloboda regiments were established and organized by officials following [the model of] Little Rus', where not only officials but also rank-and-file Cossacks are highly differentiated from the peasantry and the common people and enjoy noble rights; likewise, according to the [charters] granted to the Sloboda Regiments by the ancestors of Her Imperial Majesty, the colonels, officials and rank-and-file Cossacks are conferred with such liberties which only the Russian nobility are permitted to enjoy[9].

Izium officials insisted that "the only option is considered to be the enrollment of all those who serve in regiments," while the Kharkiv elite doubted the validity of "granted charters" as documental proof of their noble status[10].

Even the ambiguity of their legal background did not prevent officials from accepting noble self-identification, which is clearly indicated by their coats of arms. As Oleh Odnorozhenko argues, in most cases, their coats of arms included elements of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's noble heraldic tradition (which, in its turn, previously incorporated Rus' heraldic heritage). Probably the best example is the coat of arms possessed by the Kharkiv family Kvitkas, which combined six blazons: *Pogoń*, *Strzemię*, *Radwan*, *Bończa*, *Szeliga* and *Rogala* (Odnorozhenko, 330-341).

However, those genealogical investigations, which have already been conducted, demonstrate that the Cossack Officialdom of the Hetmanate and Sloboda Ukraine were connected to the Ukrainian *szlachta* of pre-Khmelnysky era. This is unsurprising, given that Bohdan Khmelnysky himself and his close entourage were nobles. Regarding this, Volodymyr Kryvosheia concludes:

Examining the social foundations of Ukrainian Cossackdom, we were able to determine the percentage of families from noble origins in the Cossack milieu. V. Lypynsky [the Ukrainian historian who articulated this problem for the first time in the early 20th century] had calculated 3, 3 %; nonetheless, our investigations make it possible to assert that this number was much higher – 12, 6 % [...]. Consequently, there are reasons to assert that the nobility who had become Cossacks served as the main source for the formation of [Cossack] officials (Kryvosheia, 349).

Here, some examples are illustrative. The first such example is the family history of the Alfyorovs, as reconstructed by Oleksandr Alfyorov. Their ancestors belonged to the old Ukrainian aristocracy from Right Bank-Ukraine. The first known person from this family was evidently Holubko Hankovych, who lived at the turn on the 16th century, had the status of *pan* (the second rank in the hierarchy of noble ranks in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania), and was engaged in the service of the Ostroz'ki princes. In the course of the next hundred years, the family split up into several branches, one of which became prosperous landowners (magnates) in the Kyiv region. A member of this line, Olifer Holub, was a companion in arms of hetman Petro Sakhaidachnyi and held the hetman's post himself three times (1622–1623, 1624, 1626). His sons supported Bohdam Khmelnysky and took various posts in the administration of the Hetmanate. They used surnames in the form of patronymics, including “Oliferovychi” (meaning “the sons of Olifer”) or in the russified variant “Alfyorovy,” rather than their family surname “Holub”. The Alfyorovs settled in the Sumy regiment, served as Cossack captains and later attained the Russian noble status. The above-mentioned historian Oleksandr Alfyorov is their direct descendant.

The other example is the Krasovskys' genealogy, on which I have worked for almost two years in cooperation with Mykola Mikhailichenko. My hypothesis is that the progenitor was a nobleman from Volhynia named Yurii Krasovsky, who was granted the property rights to the village of Volynka in the Chernihiv province in 1633. From the period of the Ukrainian War of Liberation, we know a sole person who could be related to Yurii Krasovsky. His name was Ivan Krasovsky, and he served as a captain in the Chernihiv Cossack regiment. In 1659, a nobleman named Yosyp Krasovsky was granted ownership of Volynka after the death of two nobles, Ivan Krasovsky and his son Petro. In 1673, this estate was expanded and confirmed to Yosyp and his six sons, among whom Mykhailo is the only one whose life is even partially documented. He headed the Novyi Bilous company of the Chernihiv regiment (1700) and served as the regimental aide-de-camp (1710–1716). Three of his sons – Pavlo, Yakiv and Dmytro – and their offspring continued to serve in the Chernihiv regiment, while two others – Tymophii and Ivan – moved to Sloboda Ukraine and were given posts in the Sumy regiment. The brilliant career of Tymophii and his successful marriage resulted in enormous enrichment and vast land

possessions. The *Jastrzębiec* coat of arms was pictured on his personal seal. In 1764, his children Ivan, Andrii and Paraska inherited their father's estate. On December 13, 1787[11], Ivan Krasovsky obtained a certificate confirming his status as a nobleman and, together with his family, was soon enrolled in the fourth section of the Book of Nobility of the Sloboda Ukraine *guberniia*. This means that they were recognized as noblemen of foreign origin. This myth of "Polish roots" circulated in the family even later, when the grandson of Ivan – a lieutenant colonel in the Russian army named Andrii Opanasovych Krasovsky (1822–1868) – self-identified with the Polish *szlachta* in his writings (Potapenko, *Famil'nyi*).

At any rate, the noble "ethos" accepted by Cossack Officials of the Hetmanate and Sloboda Ukraine in the late 18th century could not be called into question. Based on this assumption, the Canadian historian Zenon E. Kohut called them "*the new gentry*" (Kohut). They were closely connected through intermarriage, shared the same values, and inherited the highest positions from generation to generation. However, in 1764, everything changed irreversibly.

Integration and Transformation

On November 10, 1764, the empress Catherine II issued decrees cancelling the post of hetman and establishing instead the Little Russia College (*Malorossiiskaia kollegiia*)[12]. This decision opened the path for the further incorporation of the Hetmanate. On December 16 of the same year, Catherine II confirmed a report by Senators Yakov Shakhovskiy, Nikita Panin, and Adam Olsyfev regarding the "disorders" in the Sloboda Ukraine Cossack regiments[13]. The main measure proposed by the senators was the abolition of the regiments or, in other words, the elimination of Sloboda Ukraine's autonomy.

Here a brief discussion of the political agenda of Catherine II at that moment is necessary. Historians agree that she considered herself the successor to Peter I and a continuator of his policies, which were aimed at the centralization and unification of the Russian empire. She adhered to the concept of a "well-ordered police state" (as defined by Marc Raeff) based on the ideas of administrative and social uniformity and accurate bureaucratic management. Being an "enlightened sovereign", Catherine II believed that "fundamental laws" could protect everyone under her rule and provide a common weal (Madariaga). It was this ideological platform, therefore, that determined her policy towards Ukraine.

It seems that the integration of Sloboda Ukraine was easier than that of the Hetmanate, where century-old state traditions engendered a stronger resistance. The newly appointed governor of Sloboda Ukraine, Yevdokym Shcherbinin, undertook the main reforms over the course of 1765. His personality alone merits separate research. His correspondence with Catherine II gives the impression of an extremely ambitious and sly person seeking his own profit and playing up to the throne[14].

The main reforms affected the administrative, military and social spheres. Firstly, the Sloboda Ukraine *guberniia* was established. From 1765–1780, it covered the terrain of the five former regiments, which had been renamed as provinces. The new system of local

authorities corresponded to the general principles of regional government in the Russian Empire and had certain peculiarities. The governor exerted central control with the assistance of the *guberniia* office. *Voivodes* and provincial offices administrated the middle level, while commissars and commissar offices managed the lowest one.

It is of particular interest that all leading positions such as the governor, his assistants, and the *voivodes* were held by personnel from outside of Sloboda Ukraine. At the same time, Cossack officials were not dismissed completely. Instead, they were encouraged to attain second-tier civil positions. For instance, in 1765-1767 out of 33 persons known as commissars, 30 were former local Cossack officials. In the provincial administrations, some Cossack officials even attained the positions of voivode's assistants (such as the former regimental judges Fedir Tatarchukov, Semen Liubashevsky and Oleksandr Parafiiievsky, as well as the regimental quartermaster Vasyl' Boiarsky). Furthermore, in 1768 the former Ostrohoz'k colonel Stepan Tev'iashov was appointed to the post of governor's assistant, held it for at least three years and later became a *voivode* of Ostrohoz'k. However, Tev'iashov's case was rather exceptional (Potapenko, *Kanceliars'ki*).

The second reform concerned the Cossack regiments as military units. They were eliminated and in their place five hussar regiments under the same titles of Ostrohoz'k, Kharkiv, Okhtyrka, Sumy and Iziium were formed. Nonetheless, the situation surrounding them was quite complicated. As can be concluded from the hussar regiments' archives, they remained understaffed for about a year. On the one hand, they experienced a permanent lack of rank-and-file hussars, who were mostly former Cossacks and who often fled from the new service. On the other hand, former fellows of the banner who were expected to become junior officers retired shortly after their appointments.[15]

Approximately half of the former Cossack officials continued civil or military service after 1765. The others were allowed to retire with promotion. According to a proposal from Yevdokim Shcherbinin, approved by Catherine II on July 4, 1766, retired persons received the ranks of commissioned officers of the Russian army.[16] This gave them the right to obtain hereditary noble status, as established by Peter I in the *Table of Ranks* in 1722. In other words, from the very beginning the strategy of St. Petersburg was aimed at integration by means of civil and military service. This channel remained in place thereafter, continuing even when the Sloboda Ukraine *guberniia* was transformed into the Kharkiv viceregency in 1780 and the system of local authorities was changed accordingly.

The third main change occurred within the social structure of Sloboda Ukraine society. After 1765 the legal status of former Cossack officials remained unclear, while rank-and-file Cossacks were reduced to the condition of state peasantry under poll taxation. This measure laid a demarcation line between the two groups and moved the officials closer toward membership in the Russian nobility.

The next important step in this direction was made in 1766-1769 when Catherine II convened the Legislative Commission to renew the laws of the Russian Empire. The three main estates – nobility, townsmen, and state peasantry – were ordered to elect deputies,

give them a so-called “*nakaz*” (an instruction with all needs and propositions), and send them to the general assembly in Moscow. There was no officially recognized nobility in Sloboda Ukraine, but this did not prevent Yevdokim Shcherbinin from issuing orders to the lower-ranking *voivodes* and commissars to organize elections among the former Cossack officials. His main message was to carry out everything “decently, calmly and silently”.^[17] The recommended procedure was generally followed and in March 1767 the deputies were elected. The *Lists of Deputies* of the Legislative Commission name these persons: Matvii Kulykovsky from Kharkiv, Stepan Tev’iashov from Ostrohoz’k, Vasyl’ Boiarsky from Okhtyrka, Andrii Kondratev from Sumy, and Ivan Zarudnev from Iziium noble communities.^[18] Four out of five (except the retired major Ivan Zarudnev) represented local officialdom. In Moscow, they were honored equally with the “true” noble deputies from the inner Russian *guberniias*.

The most important aspect of this event is the content of the *nakazy* from Sloboda Ukraine. The full collection of texts is deposited in the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts, while the set of noble petitions was published in the late 19th century.^[19] Briefly, these narratives could be described as completely loyal to the authorities. One cannot find any hints of regrets for abolished Cossack autonomy. To the contrary, there are requests for confirmation of economic “liberties,” which had been granted previously in the charters. Moreover, former officials sought a prohibition on free peasantry moving from one master to another; in other words, for establishing serfdom in Sloboda Ukraine. They even once articulated the question of their social status in a subservient, humble way typical for such documents:

[...] Like slaves, we are supplicating to establish our prosperity by granting us noble dignity with the titling hereditary the present Cossack officials and the fellows of the banner those grandfathers served as officials the nobility of Sloboda *guberniia* [...], and to make us happy by enrolling to the noble lists of the Heraldry Office [...] and by giving diplomas of such dignity and coats of arms.^[20]

The problem of legal social status was closely related to land property rights. From the mid-17th century onward, Cossack officials were equal to rank-and-file Cossacks (and even peasantry) with regards to the right to possess as much land as one can cultivate without any documents (the so-called right of *zaimanshchyna*). In the second half of the 18th century, this fact confused officials greatly. However, the imperial administration granted them a favour. In 1765, the department of estates (*votchinnyi departament*) was established in the Sloboda Ukraine *guberniia* office. All land still held by former Cossack officials could be legalized on the basis of the simple fact of current possession. The final division between the noble and non-noble lands in the region was made in 1780s during the *General Land Survey*.

By the end of the 18th century, the Sloboda Ukraine Cossack officials had their noble status recognized. This was related to the above-mentioned introduction of the Charter to the Nobility in 1785. In this document, noble dignity was defined as “a hereditary [right] derived from the quality and virtue of outstanding men of former times who distinguished themselves by their deeds and who, having thereby made their service worthy of honor, acquired the title of nobility for their prosperity”.^[21] The Russian nobility eventually

were granted a privileged corporate status with the exclusive sum of rights: possession of lands and serfs and exemption from compulsory state service, personal taxation, and corporal punishment.

In Sloboda Ukraine, the first Book of Nobility was composed in 1786-1796.[22] The total number of families was 1272. According to my calculations, at least 632 of them (or 49,69 %) were from the local Cossack officialdom. The others were mostly noblemen from inner Russian *guberniias* and the Balkans who had bought estates there. The distribution of Cossack officials families within the noble categories is the following: the first category – 61, 04 % (47 families out of 77), the second – 50, 07 % (333 families out of 665), the third – 44, 90 % (88 families out of 196), the fourth – 33, 82 % (23 families out of 68), the fifth – 0 % (no families out of 3), and the sixth – 53, 61 % (141 families out of 263).

What do these figures indicate? Firstly, they show that the majority of Cossack officials' families failed to prove their old noble origins from the pre-Khmelnytsky era and, therefore, were enrolled in the first three categories. In other words, they were considered as ennobled commoners. Secondly, no local family gained the status of entitled aristocracy. In contrast, some of those who considered themselves “foreign nobility” (Polish or Moldavian) received registration in the fourth category. At the same time, nearly every fifth family succeeded in their search for ancient ancestors (whether real or invented) and was listed in the prestigious sixth section.

Additionally, some Sloboda Ukraine elite families were enrolled in the Books of Nobility of neighboring *guberniias*. In the Books of Nobility of Voronezh *guberniia* from 1797, I noticed 161 families of Cossack officials origins, namely 70 of them in the first category, 47 in the second, 17 in the third, 5 in the fourth and 22 in the sixth[23]. The Books of Nobility of Kursk *guberniia* from 1786–1797 contain information on 47 families from Sloboda Ukraine, specifically 5 in the first section, 10 in the second, 4 in the third and 28 in the sixth[24]. Finally, 13 families were entered in the Books of Nobility of Orlov *guberniia*: 3 in each of the first and the second categories and 13 in the sixth category. Thereby, 859 families of Sloboda Ukraine Cossack officials were ennobled in the late 18th century.

Conclusions

Summing up, the integration of Sloboda Ukraine Cossack officialdom in the Russian imperial society could be generally defined as a “soft” social transformation based mostly on economic preferences. It was a kind of *modus vivendi* reached between the local elite and the imperial government. This mutually beneficial contract gave the Ukrainian elite guarantees of high social status and ensured its loyalty to the imperial centre. In comparison with other peripheries of the Russian empire, the case of Sloboda Ukraine seems to be similar to the case of Baltic Germans in respect to a rather flexible policy adopted by the metropole and the almost complete absence of resistance. However, the local “Cossack myth” remained alive for several decades and was finally transformed into the ideological background for the modern Ukrainian nation building.

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Notes:

[1] The Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Kyiv (CSHAU in Kyiv), fond 785, 1584, 1709, 1710, 1717, 1722, 1723, 1733, 1725, 1782, 1807, 1815–1818 and others.

[2] The Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (RSAAA), fond 3, opis' 1, delo 20; fond 5, opis. 1, delo 122; fond 10, opis' 2, delo 46, 314, 332; opis' 3, delo 11, 400, 174, 203, 289, 481, 505; fond 16, opis'. 1, delo 245, 374, 376, 755, 799 (chast' 1, 2), 938, 939, 951, 999–1003; fond 1342, opis' 1, delo 109 (chast' 8), 110 (chast' 1–3); fond 453, opis' 1, delo 1, 2, 8; fond 953, opis' 1, delo 54, 83.

[3] Ibid., fond 1355, opis' 1, delo 203, 235, 288, 316, 663, 1897, 1913, 1918, 1920, 1923, 1934, 1935, 1947, 1951, 1963, 1969, 1980, 1990, 2004, 2008, 2025.

[4] The Russian State Military Historical Archive, fond 489, opis' 1, delo 2259, 2263, 2274, 2703, 2705, 2711, 2715, 2717, 2719, 2721, 2723, 2732–2734, 2736, 2739, 2741, 2760 and others.

[5] The Collection of Manuscripts of the Russian State Library, fond 132, karton 3, delo 3, 4; karton 4, delo 5; fond 222, karton 15, delo 25.

[6] The State Archive of Russian Federation, fond 109, opis' 37, delo 230, chast' 42.

[7] The Russian State Historical Archive (RSHA), fond 1343, opis' 51, delo 66–68, 132–137, 419–421, 542–551, 593, 608, 611, 623, 633, 635, 638, 648.

[8] The Manuscripts Department of the National Library of Russia, fond 1, 18, 37, 69, 73, 116, 179, 197, 236, 588, 609, 611, 662, 731, 744, 1000.

[9] CSHAU in Kyiv, fond 817, opys 1, sprava 20, ark. 98r.

[10] Ibid., fond 1725, opys 1, sprava 594, ark. 12r–8v, 15r–15v, 56r–56v.

[11] All dates are given according to the Julian calendar accepted at that time in the Russian empire. It lagged behind the Gregorian calendar by eleven days in the 18th century.

[12] The Nominal Decree on Establishing in the Little Russia instead of the Hetman's Governing the Little Russia College (10 November 1764), *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*, vol. 16, Saint Petersburg, 1830, pp. 961–963.

[13] The Imperially Confirmed Report by Senators Yakov Shakhovsky, Nikita Panin and Adam Olsyfev (16 December 1764), Ibid., pp. 1003–1007.

[14] RSAAA, fond 5, opis' 1, delo 118, 122.

[15] CSHAU in Kyiv, fond 1815, opys 1, sprava 34, 98, 103, 106, 153, 175, 201 and others.

[16] Ibid., fond 1807, opys 1, sprava 130, ark. 1r–2r.

[17] Ibid., fond 1710, opys 2, sprava 370, ark. 3v.

[18] Ibid., sprava 244, 314, 370, 478; RSHAAA, fond 342, opis' 1, delo 110, chast' 1–3.

[19] The Deputies' Instructions and Fully Subservient Petitions from the Nobility of Sloboda Ukraine Guberniia, *Sbornik Imperatorskogo Russkogo Istoricheskogo Obshchestva*, vol. 68, Saint Petersburg 1889, pp. 249–324.

[20] Ibid., 300.

[21] I give the quotation from the Charter to the Nobility in the translation by Robert E. Jones (Jones 275–276). For the full text of the Charter see: The Granted Charter on Rights, Liberties and Preferences to the Honorable Russian Nobility (24 April 1785), in *Zakonodatel'stvo Ekateriny II. V Dvuh Tomah*, ed. Oleg Chistiakov, and Tatiana Novickaia, vol. 2 (Moscow: Yuridicheskaiia Literatura 2001), 29–49.

[22] RSHA, fond 1343, opis' 51, delo 543–548.

[23] Ibid., delo 66–67.

[24] Ibid., delo 132–135.

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