



RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE APPEARANCE OF "THE THIRD POWER". THE CHANGE OF THE UKRAINIAN
POLITICAL ELITE IN THE XVTH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

In this article the evolution of the princely-magnate and gentry elite groups under the conditions of late Middle Ages is analyzed. The process of gradual convergence of the elite layers is traced. It is proved that side by side with the struggle for political levers of the management of the government, there were slow processes of statutory leveling and interpenetration between princely and gentry elite layers. The slowness of such processes was dictated by the conservative character of medieval elite, the cliquishness of social status which were conditioned by the Christian tradition of structure of society and feudal economical system. The chain of reasons of damping of prince's families is suggested. Here we can make a conclusion that as a result of the processes mentioned above the Ukrainian princely-gentry elite lost the signs of political elite of the nation, and in the 20-40th of the XVI century such functions the new elite of Ukraine – Cossack starshyna assumed.

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INTRODUCTION

The topicality of the investigation is grounded on the fact that in the native and foreign historiography the problem of replenishment and circulation of the elite (convergence of elite layers) in the epoch of Middle Ages practically wasn't paid attention to. As a rule, historical explorations came to statement of the facts of the struggle of princely elite and newborn gentry and gradual victory of the last, that transformed Poland and in some time *RechPospolita* into gentry republic, however not resorting to deep analysis of the reasons of the mentioned process. Certain aspects of the investigated problem are analyzed in the works of such Ukrainian historians as M.S. Hryshevskiy, A.V. Blanytsy, I.Z. Mytsko, N.M. Yakovenko and others on works and thoughts of which references in the text are made. The reasons of ascent of the princely elite from the political stage in the first half of the XVII century were not investigated by historians separately. The question about irreversibility of the emergency on the historical arena of the Cossack starshyna as elite of the nation in the given context wasn't put.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

On the basis of statement material of Lithuanian great princes, Lithuanian and Russian (Volynska) metrics by means of the comparative analysis, the processes of convergence of elite layers, the possible ways of penetration of the middle and small gentry to higher links of political elite are shown.

Account of the basic material

The medieval princes took the special position of the higher privileged caste of the elite access to which gave just the right of birth. Experts of genealogy name more than 50 princely genders on the Ukrainian lands which included nearly 560 persons of spear side since the end of the XIVth till the middle of the XVIIth

century. The polish explorer J. Wolf who worked in St. Petersburg numbered more than 250 Russian and Lithuanian gentry families who also pretended to prince's status and tried to prove it [1, p.52]. Princes took a special place in the hierarchy of Ukrainian elite, they have never been dissolved in the boyars-gentry mass as they were separated from it by the origin barrier which took in medieval society irrational religious-heroic character and exactly in them Ukrainian thinkers (Z. Kopystenskiy, I. Boretskiy, S. Kosov and others) saw inheritors of prince's kins of Kiev Rus[1, p. 70-71] laying ideological foundation of the revival of Ukrainian statehood in the period of Cossacks. In the medieval epoch the political power, legitimate supremacy was identified not so with the state as with the political leader: this tradition was laid by the chronicle and Christian literature which during the centuries have been modeling in the mass consciousness the image of "ideal ruler". Such leaders were the princes who symbolized in the masses the idea of independence, national idea.

Ostrozki can serve as example, as they had plots of land in Volyn, Kyivshchyna, Galychyna and in Lithuania. A. Petrushevych brought the documents which witnessed that the gentry of Ostrozki possessed the third part of the land in Volyn[2, p. 57]. The representatives of the gentry as the rest of representatives of princely-magnate elite layer had essential status advantages: they occupied high state positions, were not under the jurisdiction of provincial administration being indictable to the court of The Great prince. Their positions were inherited [3;4]. The political influence of this gentry increased thanks to ties of blood practically with all notable families of the Great Lithuanian Princedom. Socio-political and even private life of the princes Ostrozki was widely discussed in the elite society and masses, and in social consciousness it acquired the higher content. As we see, the princely elite layer had incomparable bigger opportunities for

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self-realization in politics, economics, and management activities than other elite layers.

The situation changed greatly at the end of XVIth century. It is known that in Volyn and Kyivshchyna more than 600 Ukrainian families on the turning point of XV-XVI century and gave its name and was considered by people as "gentry" that is of noble origin [5]. Evaluating the position of prince's elite layer in Lithuanian Ukraine, N. Yakovenko notices that «Gradually Volyn turned to original preserve of archaic conceptions about obedience divided into spheres of influence between ancestral clans of princes-patrons, but since the second half of XVI th century the wave of prince's domination rolled to Kyivshchyna and Braclavshchyna, and in the end of this century hundreds of noblemen-galicians will join the ranks of prince's layer. As in the majority of European countries the expansion of the layer of old elite in Ukraine happened from below on account of so-called simple knights – common vigilantes, palace servants or wealthy peasants who maintained land under the condition of execution of military service in the army of patron.»[6; p. 364]. Let's indicate that mentioned by the researcher mass of people entered the prince's families conditionally – on the relations of protection-clientela, and of course they were not princes. But prince's elite layer became stronger on account of indraft of quite dependent from it active, ambitious and quiet wealthy representatives of lower layers: completely possible that some of them soon were able to unite with princes and the ties of blood.

As it is known, the main political and economic competitor of the prince's layer was gentry. Old Russian "considerable" boyars were apprehended in two means: traditional Russian as the top of the elite that is the close to prince and as professional warrior. At the end of XVth century a new term for designation of well-born boyars – "boyary-shlyaha" that specified and narrowed the frames of elite supplementing the professional meaning ("boyar") by status term "gentry", which witnessed so-called "urozhenist" ("Gentry" – appropriate word, connected with germ. Geschlecht – gender, generation, in polish language "szlachta" that means a person of famous origin). Such term "boyars-gentry" or "kighthood-gentry" (a knight is a professional warrior, that is a boyar) was fixed in the Russian language since the end of the XIVth century – the beginning of the XVth century and was used in the First Lithuanian Statute 1529 [7, p. 55-58].

The transformation of Ukrainian boyars-knights into gentry with the following changes of collective consciousness proceeded roughly by polish example. 1434 can be considered as the turning starting point when Halytska Rus was finally transferred from the status of personal royal domain to the status of full-fledged region of the Polish Crown. By the same thing the local kighthood automatically received all prerogatives gained by the gentry of Polish Crown during the previous century. In particular it became free from subordination to royal deputies – "kashtelyany" henceforth forming the organs of local self-government and legal proceedings and solving other problems of interior life of own land on regular gatherings – "seymkah". However all previous duties, which were imposed upon the knights as the servants of the king were dissolved. Henceforth Galician gentry like polish wasn't liable to any obligations concerning royal power, except payment of two groshey yearly from the field of a peasant-homager; the mansion of the nobleman couldn't be confiscated and its person considered to be untouched without judgment; the nobleman owned the judicial law over his own homagers, and his word was compared to juridical witness. Attention is paid to one of the recent articles of famous Moscow historians B. Flori which

directly touches the topic of our investigation [8; p.5-12]. Using the method of comparative analysis, B. Florya absolutely rightly characterizes the struggle of political power leadership (royal in Poland and princely in Russia) and gentry and boyar elite layers showing the differences in its course of events and results.

Quite argued are the author's thoughts about the aim of this struggle: political leadership trying to keep dominating positions and key levers of power was solving another strategic task – formation according to its results a nationwide political elite. The author's methodological approach to treating the political elite seems to be not so clear: he names the inner struggle between the ruling princely layer of political elite and not-ruling military-economical (boyar-gentry) layer of the same elite as a struggle between a state and political elite (it's nonsense because state is the political elite and levers of power in its hands). From our point of view the inner hierarchical struggle between different links of political elite (ruling and contrruling) for preservation/broadening the volumes of power and influence was dictated by irreversible Renaissance traditions in Europe to dilution of absolute power of political leadership (the head of the state and his encircling) through giving to other elite layers – gentry, barons, hierarchs of the church the part of authorities (the chain of control, judicial, fiscal and others) and representative functions in parliaments and their analogues. Such way of reformation of political system and evolution of political elite was repeated in most European countries except Russia where because of the differences in the strategy of transformation of the elite society absolutism was shut for a long time.

Polish kings during the whole joint Ukrainian-polish history in the holding of their politics accented attention on the fixing and defence of the polish gentry's property, herewith often limiting and sometimes depriving of proprietary right of Ukrainian landowners progeny of which acquired this status mainly in Galytsko-Volynska state. This was put in the general ideological conception of opolyachennya and okatolychennya, what the Polish Crown held on all dependent lands. The similar processes were in Lithuania. From the beginning of the XVIth century according to Radomska constitution, the system of higher state institutions arose in Lithuania. It was fully borrowed from Poland: two-chamber parliament – Senate and Gentry izba [9;10]. Gentry Seyms are regional gatherings of higher state had the right of legislative activities and some functions of state management. Started in the XIVth century the formation of gentry state on Lithuanian lands continued in the XVth century and finished in the XVIth century. In order to chasten the gentry from casual people great princely power in 1522 adopted a special verdict about "withdrawal of gentry". In 1528 the "Popyszemski" and census of army wee held, so the lists of gentry after the Seym's approval were revalued on the basis of documental appliance to gentry's state [11;12]. The first Lithuanian statute of 1529 turned the immunity charters of gentry which every time were confirmed by new princes in stable legal rules. Opening and inspection of castles and monitors in Ukraine held in the 40-50th of the XVI century specified the staff of gentry and its servants.

Till the XVIth century the polish elite power used the special title, especially the title "master/pan", which came from Czech practice [1;p.97]. The title "pan" since the middle of the XVth century became widely used in the great Lithuanian Kingdom. The most notable landowners, boyars-vassals and courtiers were designated by it: first the Volynian princes and then round the whole Lithuania and Byelorussia. According to military census in 1528 and revision in 1545 from the mentioned 217

Volynianzemyanskihkins, this title was used by more than a quarter [12]. Among boyars of Kyivshchyna and Bratslavshchyna (revisions of 1545-1552), 448 families of boyar-gentry families are mentioned, among whom 105 families that is less than a quarter received the title of master. For that time the criteria of such title was the antiquity of a kin and otchynnyy character of landowning that followed from this antiquity [1; p.228]. Opportune is the thought of N. Yakovenko about the fact that social consciousness among the representatives of gentry became apparent in a special way. Perceiving oneself as something socially different, more valuable and higher than common peasant society firmly became consolidated in the consciousness of small gentry [6]. This class consciousness had inherent to medieval elite stable conservative character, firmly tied with the past when it had clearly lined class privileges.

Hereafter the gentry aspired to keep its corporative features in spite of essential social displacement [13; p.52-61]. In spite of weak political and economical opportunities to growing, this social layer possessed the important in the Middle Ages "possession" – personal freedom which peasants didn't have for a long time. Though formally, but small gentry belonged to privileged gentry class which gave it the right to be on higher social footstep than enslaved peasants, and theoretically gave it the opportunities for social growing and high jump in the hierarchical pyramid of the elite of that time. Other opportunities were the military and state merits (remember the Khmelnytskyi kin), a happy event of meeting with an influential patron, economical success or a successful marriage with a representative of a higher elite layer – love and marriage of convenience wasn't abolished in the Middle Ages. Socially active part of small gentry tried to use all enumerated opportunities but such incidents became rather exceptions – hard hierarchy and aspiration for self-preservation of the ruling elite was notable, though as a whole, thanks to the processes that came "from the top" and "from below" position of native gentry in Polish and Lithuanian parts of Ukraine was constantly changing.

The purposefulness of creation of the gentry elite not only "from below" and "from above" is confirmed documentary. The Great Prince Lithuanian and the Polish king Sigismund I the Old (1506-1548) during all his government issued the chain of letters and privileges of "nadavchyi" character on the Ukrainian land of A Great Lithuanian Kingdom. In the quantitative correlation "nadavchi" letters and privileges were practically equaled to confirmative (A. Blanyca identifies their quantity among famous documents: 99 against 116 accordingly) [14; p. 60-72]. During the first five years of his ruling the Great Prince Lithuanian gave the Ukrainian gentry the biggest quantity of letters-concessions and confirmations. The bigger part of the documents of confirmative character (83 from 116) is addressed to Volynian gentry [15; p. 440]. In 1468 The Code of Law was published where the norms of criminal and criminal-commitment right were codified, and they were directed at the defence of feudal property of both princes and gentry [13; 16].

Let's mention that in spite of the fact that in all times the princes first of all were the warriors, political figures and higher administrators, statesmen that is the leading elite layer of society, the low mobility among this elite class led up to the gradual extinction of prince's kins. The dilution of princely elite layer in the general mass of gentry, on the one hand, was the result of purposeful politics of Polish dictatorial elite on creation the single gentry elite class and became one more reason of rapid damping of Ukrainian princely kins. At the beginning of the XVIIth century

the degradation and even physical extinction of Ukrainian princely elite was noticed [14]. As N. Yakovenko mentions and Russian metrics confirms the Ostrozkikinsdisapper, the last female-representative of which died in 1654, Koretski (1651), Ruzhynski (possibly disappeared till the middle of the XVIIth century), Zaslavski (1673), Zbarazki (1631), Porytski (1633), Pronski (30's of the XVIIth cent.) [1, p.96; 17]. One of the important reasons of this N. Yakovenko calls the complex of results of cross marriages and family hereditary diseases [1, p.122-123].

Among other reasons of this process we can name the efforts of the great latifundists on keeping the property by means of closely related marriages or vice versa dilution of kins through marriages with wealthy representatives of lower elite layers for saving property from selling; giving by impoverished princes lands on bail and on lease, their transition to serving state and so on. In our opinion, one of the reasons was failing to return from Europe to violent Ukraine, where the elite usually was risking its life and property; the parts of gilded youth, succession of princes kins after studying in European universities preferred to build a family and carrier in relatively calm conditions of western civilization a rentier and quickly assimilate with the local elite. Altogether the complex of reasons which led to the extinction of Ukrainian princely elite from the political process still needs the further studying – maybe a separate professional investigation.

CONCLUSIONS

In such a way in the early 20's of the XVI century on the Ukrainian lands there was a trust of patriotically disposed orthodox and intellectual elite in nationally-liberation achievements of princes melt in connection with rapid damping of powerful princely kins and dilution of this elite layer in the gentry mass. The greater part of wealthy gentry successfully conformed to political and social realia of Polish-lithuanian state, quickly assimilated and lost any features of national elite. In new, inconvenient conditions of statelessness and withdrawal from political arena of an old princely-boyar (gentry) elite Ukrainian nation with lightning speed drew up a new political elite – Cossack-foremen, which exactly from this period starts to increase the national-liberation protesting potential that was embodied in the chain of scale Cossack-peasant wars with Poland in 20-40's of the XVIth century and Liberation War of Ukrainian nation under the guidance of B. Khmelnytskyi. These military-political tempests in the final result cut out again the map of Europe and led to irreversible decrease and division of Polish Crown. Let's underline that among the Cossack leaders there were 14% of gentry by origin and the best sons of Ukrainian princely kins.

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