

A “Ukrainian” Project of the Giray Dynasty: A Little-Known Chapter in the History of the Steppe Borderlands of the 17th–18th Centuries: Владислав Грибовський. Ханська Україна. Харків: Фоліо, 2024. 414 с.: іл. (Серія: Великий науковий проєкт) ISBN 978-966-03-8087-5; ISBN 978-617-551-803-8

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Summary. Dr. Vladyslav Hrybovsky’s study “Chanska Ukraina” (in Ukrainian) presents a scientific reconstruction of the history of the Cossack enclave that existed in the territory of the Crimean Khanate in the northwestern region – along the border with the Peoples’ Republic of Belarus – in the 17th century – 18th century. The monograph examines the geopolitical conditions that led to the emergence of Christian autonomy in a Muslim state, as well as the dynamics of its functioning. The book provides a detailed account of events and biographical portraits of little-known or completely unknown historical figures related to the history of this “Ukraine” – which belonged to the Crimean Khans. The results of the study are important for a wide range of scholars: from historians, diplomacy and international relations researchers in the Central and Eastern European region to specialists in Turkology and early modern nomadic societies.

Keywords: Cossacks, Etnan, Ukraine, Crimean Khanate, borderland, geopolitical conditions, Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth

„Ukrainietiškas“ Girajų dinastijos projektas: mažai žinomas XVII–XVIII a. stepių pasienio istorijos laikotarpis

Santrauka. Dr. Vladyslavo Hrybovskio studijoje „Chanskoji Ukraina“ (ukrainiečių k.) pateikiama mokslinė kazokų anklavo, egzistavusio Krymo chanato teritorijoje šiaurės vakarų regione palei sieną su Abiejų Tautų Respublika XVII a. dešimtajame – XVIII a. aštuntajame dešimtmetyje, istorijos rekonstrukcija. Monografijoje nagrinėjamos geopolitinės sąlygos, lėmusios krikščioniškosios autonomijos atsiradimą musulmoniškoje valstybėje, bei jos funkcionavimo dinamika. Knygoje pateikiamas išsamus įvykių pasakojimas ir biografiniai mažai žinomų ar visai nežinomų istorinių veikėjų portretai, susiję su šios „Ukrainos“ – priklausiusios Krymo chanams – istorija. Tyrimo rezultatai yra svarbūs dideliam mokslininkų ratui: nuo istorikų, diplomatijos ir tarptautinių santykių tyrėjų Vidurio ir Rytų Europos regione iki tiurkologijos ir ankstyvųjų naujųjų laikų klajoklių visuomenių specialistų.

Raktažodžiai: kazokai, etmonas, Ukraina, Krymo chanatas, pasienis, geopolitinės sąlygos, Abiejų Tautų Respublika

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The opening section of the reviewed book, titled *Preface* (pp. 3–10), introduces the reader to the significance of the region under study – “the Ukraine of the Crimean Khans” – within the broader context of Ukrainian history. For the sake of clarity and conciseness, the reviewer proposes referring to this region as *Kh. Ukr.* throughout the text, given the syntactic awkwardness that may arise from translated constructions from Ukrainian into English.

Particular emphasis is placed on the frontier nature of this territory – not only as a geographic intersection of the Polish–Lithuanian Common-

wealth and the Ottoman Empire (with the Romanov monarchy’s territories later approaching), but also as a contact zone between civilisations: Islamic and Christian (Catholic and Orthodox). It was equally a site of interaction between contrasting ways of life: sedentary and nomadic.

In this section, the author also outlines the chronological and geographical scope of the study, offers a critical overview of the existing historiography, and defines key terms, highlighting where their meanings remain contested within scholarly discourse.

Chapter 1 *The Steppe Crossroads of Worlds* (pp. 11–93), consists of three sections. **Section 1.1 *The Golden Horde and Lithuanian Periods*** offers the reader an overview of the region’s medieval history that would later become *Kh. Ukr.* It presents a kaleidoscopic sequence of population shifts and territorial subjugation by various states, with particular attention to the region’s frontier character. The colonisation of the area by both Turkic and Slavic groups is linked to the outbreak of the “Black Death” pandemic in 1348 and a series of environmental disasters (though not specified in detail, the reference likely concerns the “Little Ice Age”), both of which contributed to what scholars describe as the “pulsation of the Steppe”.

The author convincingly demonstrates that alternating phases of mutual “*reconquista*” regularly replaced one another. The absence of stable state authority gave rise to both short- and long-term phenomena associated with the so-called “Wild Field”. In this very atmosphere, Cossackdom began to emerge – initially in a Turkic form and later in a secondary Slavic form. Dr. Hrybovskyi assigns particular importance in these developments to sea-

sonal foragers known as *ukhodnyky*. The involvement of the nobility of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland (after 1569, the united Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth) in the military, political, and social life of the early Zaporozhian Host is also duly noted.

In **Section 1.2 *The Cossack Land Without Borders***, the region is depicted as a zone of intense competition over the natural resources – livestock grazing, salt extraction, hunting, and fishing – all of which consistently led to military clashes. There were periodic attempts by local administrators of the Ottoman Empire and the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth to establish fiscal control over the economic activities of both their own subjects and seasonal “visitors” from the opposite side, but more often than not proved ineffective.

The author highlights mutual raids as expressions of an old honor-based culture. He stresses the seasonal character of early Ukrainian Cossack activity in the region and its outskirts. The study compares colonization models across the frontier, showing how the rise of Cossack lifestyles helped sustain continuous steppe warfare.

At the same time, during the early modern period, the region began to acquire the characteristics of a *borderland*, increasingly shaped by elements of administrative oversight – primarily concerning border and customs control. The first official attempt to delimit the Polish–Turkish (Crimean) border along the rivers Sukhyi Yahorlyk and Kodyma dates to 1633.

In **Section 1.3 *The Legacy of Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytskyi***, the author first examines the collapse of the Polish administration’s system of control over the frontier region. He further demonstrates that, by the time of Khmelnytskyi’s uprising, a new social type had emerged in Ukraine – individuals shaped by and deeply rooted in the traditions of frontier life – which played a crucial role in his successes. During the war, three Cossack regiments were established in the territory of Podillia (1649–1651). The defeat of the insurgent forces on the right bank of the Dnipro River in 1651 triggered widespread Polish repression and led to the devastation and depopulation of the region.

Under such conditions, the region’s incorporation into the Ottoman Empire in 1672, following yet another war, was perceived by the remaining Ukrainian population as the lesser of two evils. At the same time, in the steppe zone of Bessarabia (Budjak), the local Nogai Horde was gaining strength and intensifying its raids on southern Podillia. This triggered a new wave of population movements: Ukrainians migrated *en masse* to the territories of the Principality of Moldavia, while Lithuanian Tatars (known as *Lipka Tatars*) relocated to the Crimean Khanate.

The author clearly shows how Bohdan Khmelnytskyi’s political legacy shaped the idea of Ukraine as the Land of the Cossacks. This vision was sustained by a series of Right-Bank hetmans aligned with the Ottoman Empire,

including Bohdan's son Yurii, who served until 1681. Though the hetmanacy later vanished from Ottoman practice, the notion of a Cossack polity on Ukrainian lands became widely accepted.

Chapter 2 *Cossackdom Between the Cross and the Crescent*, comprises four sections (pp. 94–171). As the title suggests, the chapter explores the complex web of military and political confrontations among the region's dominant powers and the difficult choices that Ukrainian Cossackdom – albeit its limited segment – was compelled to make under such circumstances.

Section 2.1 *Hetmans Appointed by the Khan*, examines the development of the hetmanate institution within the Crimean Khanate itself, in which appointments were made directly by the khans rather than the sultans, as had previously been the case. The author highlights the role of George Ducas, the *hospodar* of the Principality of Moldavia, who also ruled over the portion of Right-Bank Ukraine under Ottoman control from 1672 to 1699. His primary task – and that of his successors – was to revive the region through resettlement, the organisation of economic life, and security. According to the new administrators, the most effective means of achieving this was the restoration of the traditional Cossack regimental structure.

However, implementing these plans proved highly challenging for the Ottoman administration. The liberalisation of Polish policy toward Ukrainian Cossacks under King Jan Sobieski, his participation in the defence of Vienna against the Turks in 1683, and the ensuing prolonged Polish–Ottoman military confrontation throughout the 1680s and 1690s forced the sultans to seek new ways of winning the Cossacks over to their side. One such measure was the revival of the practice of appointing their own “loyal” Cossack hetmans in 1690. Unlike during the earlier period of the so-called *Ruin* – the civil war and foreign interventions following the death of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi – the authority of these newly appointed hetmans no longer extended across all of Right-Bank Ukraine. Instead, it was confined to the more limited territories along the Polish–Turkish frontier – *Kh. Ukr.*

Section 2.2 focuses on Petro Ivanenko (also known as Petryk or Sulyma), the first Left-Bank Cossack elite appointed hetman by the Crimean khans. His political path was complex and ultimately unsuccessful. After leading a failed rebellion against Russian-backed Hetman Mazepa in 1691, he fled to Ottoman lands, where in 1692 he was declared hetman of the so-called Principality of Little Russia.

However, his career ended with him serving as a mere puppet in the hands of his suzerains – a figurehead under whose name the Crimean Tatars and Nogais launched raiding expeditions into Ukrainian lands, ostensibly to liberate them from Muscovite control (1693–1696). Despite the fragmentary nature of the surviving documentation, the author is convincingly portraying the personal tragedy of Hetman Ivanenko and the Cossacks who followed him.

The title of **Section 2.3 *An Attempt at Peace***, accurately reflects the content presented. The war of the Holy League against the Ottoman Empire (1686–1699) ended with the signing of the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, so the inhabitants of *Kh. Ukr.* seemingly had a chance for a peaceful life. The delimitation and demarcation of the Polish–Turkish border, carried out in 1703, was expected to contribute to this.

However, as Vladyslav Hrybovskyi convincingly demonstrates, peace never truly materialised. Several factors prevented it, the most significant being:

1. The uprising of Right-Bank Ukrainian Cossacks against Polish authority, led by the atamans Palii and Samus (1702–1704);
2. The involvement of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Great Northern War, which brought Russian troops (as well as Hetman Mazepa's Ukrainian) to the right bank of the Dnipro;
3. The Russo-Turkish War of 1710–1713;
4. The Polish *reconquista* of Right-Bank Ukraine in 1713–1714, which destroyed the Cossack administrative and military structure.

Some of these events directly affected *Kh. Ukr.*, while others unfolded in neighbouring regions such as Podillia and Moldavia. Nevertheless, both individually and collectively, they caused widespread population displacement, contributed to the rise of banditry in the region, and ultimately reinforced its continuing decline.

By contrast, the title of **Section 2.4 *Metamorphoses of the Hetmanate Title***, is largely symbolic. The section deals less with the transformation of the hetman institution in *Kh. Ukr.* – such as the alignment of the khan-appointed hetmans' duties with the lofty connotations of their title and other expected topics – and more with the region's broader history during the first third of the 18th century. This authorial choice is fully justified: little is known about the hetmans of that era. Once again, the scarcity of primary sources available to scholars becomes evident.

What is known suggests that most of these hetmans were members of an Armenian merchant corporation – effectively leaseholders of the title – who acted primarily out of personal interest. The narrative of events presented in this section reinforces the broader trend of decline in the once-proud tradition of the Cossacks electing their supreme leader.

Particularly noteworthy is Dr. Hrybovskyi's realistic portrayal of how the collapse of Cossack state structures on both sides of the Dnipro contributed to the re-emergence of a long-forgotten phenomenon: the *haidamak* bands (transborder brigands). Equally deserving of recognition is his account of the colonisation of *Kh. Ukr.* between Russia's two wars with the Ottoman Empire (1710–1713 and 1735–1739).

New settlers in the region included married Cossacks from both banks of the Dnipro fleeing repression, Balkan migrants (Bulgarians, Greeks, Serbs), Russian Old Believers, Lithuanian Lipka Tatars, and Cheremises seeking better service terms. Their stories reveal hopes, hardships, and eventual disillusionment. For many, Kh. Ukr. seemed a final “Promised Land” – but for most, those hopes ended in disappointment.

The penultimate chapter of the book – **Chapter 3 *Ukraine of the Crimean Khanate*** – narrates a brief period of relative stability in the region’s history, lasting less than thirty years (pp. 172–255).

Section 3.1 *Illusory Peace*, presents the key theses concerning the history of *Kh. Ukr.* during the interval between the end of the previous Russo–Turkish War (1739) and the beginning of the next one (1768). This was the period when the region, as becomes evident, reached its greatest territorial extent – stretching along the entire length of the Polish–Turkish border and once again extending beyond the protective reach of the Ottoman fortresses on the Dniester River. The population grew significantly while its ethnic composition remained strikingly diverse.

The fleeting nature of this stability is vividly illustrated by the author through depictions of what can only be described as Brownian motion across the lands of *Kh. Ukr.* and the surrounding territories. This turbulence was largely spurred by *haidamak* bands of varying origin (primarily Zaporozhian), who rebelled against the khan, the Nogais, and others unwilling to embrace a peaceful life. At the same time, as Vladyslav Hrybovskyi perceptively observes, “the inhabitants of the steppe borderlands were constrained by the rigid framework of order imposed by foreign powers” (p. 172), which in effect forced even the freest among them to conform to the norms of civil life as envisioned by external governments.

The next section – 3.2 *The Hetmancy of Yakub Rudziewicz* – is among the book’s most compelling, centered on a truly extraordinary figure. Yakub Rudziewicz, the last hetman of Kh. Ukr. and the first Muslim in that role, was a Lithuanian Tatar from Sorok Tatar. A diplomat, spy, polyglot, and cosmopolitan, he embodied the versatile, self-made elite of the 18th century – driven by ambition and adaptability.

Rudziewicz was appointed as the Dubossary hetman in 1766. Functionally, Yakub-aga was entrusted with governing *Kh. Ukr.*, promoting its settlement (by enticing subjects from other states), collecting taxes from the population and tolls from transiting merchants, and overseeing intelligence gathering (pp. 217, 225). He fulfilled these duties with distinction. As Dr. Hrybovskyi notes, “Low duties and taxes, improved road security, and the development of trade infrastructure promised the Khanate’s Ukraine favourable economic prospects” (p. 229).

Unfortunately, as the following chapters show, circumstances did not allow this vector of development for *Kh. Ukr.* to fully materialise. The region stood on the threshold of a new wave of upheavals.

These developments are examined in section 3.3, *Two Hetmans, One Mace*. Beginning in June 1768, *Kh. Ukr.* was engulfed by a series of events that led to its near-total decline and devastation. It would be inaccurate to describe these developments as wholly unexpected. The spiral of conflict had been tightening for some time, and the author persuasively outlines its key components:

1. The mounting tensions between the Ottoman and Russian Empires, stemming from the latter's extensive colonisation of the steppe frontier beginning in the early 1750s;
2. The Russo–Polish conflict, triggered by the rivalry between supporters and opponents of King Stanisław Poniatowski, that actively involved Saint Petersburg;
3. The so-called “Ukrainian question,” framed by the Russian government as a struggle against the oppression of Orthodox Christians within the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth.

The *Koliivshchyna* – a major *haidamak* uprising that erupted in Right-Bank Ukraine in late May 1768 – also swept through *Kh. Ukr.* Despite its formal status within the Crimean Khanate (and, by extension, the Ottoman Empire), it became a theatre of armed conflict. According to the Russian government of Empress Catherine II, this development – though contested by the author with appropriate counterarguments – was later cited as one of the main justifications for the war with the Ottomans that broke out just a few months later.

So where do two hetmans and a mace fit in? On 9 June 1768, Russian-subject Zaporozhian Cossacks captured Yakub Rudziewicz's mace in Balta. Maksym Zalizniak, a *haidamak* leader, seized the moment – declaring himself Hetman of Ukraine in rebel-held Uman. Though symbolic and unrealistic, his claim evoked powerful Cossack traditions.

This symbolic transfer of hetmanic authority – facilitated by the mace – once again illuminated, however briefly, the enduring dream of Ukrainian Cossack statehood. The swift suppression of the uprising, however, cast that hope into darkness for as long as 150 years, until the revival of the Hetmanate under Pavlo Skoropadskyi in 1918.

Chapter 4 *Ukraine in the War Between the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1768–1774* (pp. 256–322), presents what is arguably a depiction of the final stage in the existence of *Kh. Ukr.* The events of this war brought about a fundamental transformation in the region's military and political order, along with the radicalisation of the population's sentiments and way of life. They also contributed more than any prior development to extinguishing the last

embers of the once-bright flame of the hetmanic tradition that had burned so vividly at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Section 4.1 *The Campaign of Qırım Giray in the Novorossiysk Province*, offers a richly detailed account of the first year of the war. Dr Hrybovskyi's reconstruction is carried out almost at the micro-level, providing a day-by-day chronology, including descriptions of troop movements, battles, inflicted damage, and the roles played by specific individuals in the unfolding events.

As the narrative reveals, *Kh. Ukr.*, situated at the intersection of the borders of three empires, effectively became a corridor for the movement of their armies. The tragic outcome of these military operations was predictable: by the end of summer 1769, most of the settlements in *Kh. Ukr.* had been destroyed, and the local population was forced to flee to escape either death or enslavement.

Although *Kh. Ukr.* did not disappear entirely, it was reduced geographically to a small area surrounding the fortress of Dubossary on the banks of the Dniester River, which remained under the protection of a Turkish garrison. The region, however, lost its political significance. Yakub Rudziewicz, the head of the territory, retained only the nominal title of hetman (p. 274).

Section 4.2 *In the Vortex of Battles*, recounts the military campaign of late 1769 to 1770, which brought even greater catastrophe upon the region. The ongoing and increasingly brutal conflict definitively shattered *Kh. Ukr.*'s former economic vitality and the well-being of its population.

Geopolitical shifts at the regional level – such as the defection of part of the Nogai hordes from Ottoman suzerainty and their subsequent allegiance to the Russian Empire – also drew in Yakub Rudziewicz, the ever-astute “hetman of Dubossary,” who was highly attuned to the political winds. The year 1770 marked the end of *Kh. Ukr.*'s eighty-year existence. With the defection of its hetman, the region was temporarily occupied by Russian forces, and its limited autonomy within the Crimean Khanate came to a definitive end.

The author also notes that the far-reaching consequences of the devastation and desolation of the former *Kh. Ukr.* were still palpable for nearly three more decades, even after the incorporation of the *Ochakiv Region* into the Russian Empire in 1791.

Section 4.3 *Yakub Rudziewicz in Russian Service*, is directly connected to **Section 3.2 *The Hetmancy of Yakub Rudziewicz***, as it features the same central figure. This distribution of material is entirely justified, as the primary focus of the study is the historical fate of the region and its inhabitants, rather than specific individuals – however prominent they may have been.

The material presented in this section is both engaging and instructive, particularly for analysing the survival strategies and adaptive practices of a successful member of the political elite of the Crimean Khanate and, later, of the Russian Empire. It also invites reflection on the role of the *Yakub-aga fac-*

tor in the epochal transformations of the second half of the eighteenth century. For the first time in the study of the initial Russian annexation of Crimea, Dr Hrybovskyi highlights the role played by Yakub Rudziewicz in the liquidation of the Crimean Khanate.

The Afterword (pp. 323–346), titled *Exodus* by the author in the original Ukrainian text, carries rich semantic and symbolic weight, evoking multiple layers of meaning and historical resonance. Here, Dr Hrybovskyi appears not only to reflect on why and how everything ended “back then,” but also to consider the long-term consequences of the *Kh. Ukr.* episode – consequences still palpable even after 250 years. This is illustrated, for example, by drawing a connection to the 2010 Ukrainian presidential elections.

The *Exodus* is less a conclusion than a continuation, tracing the region’s later fate. As the author notes, it echoes *One Hundred Years of Solitude* – a swirl of shifting scenes without real change. Events of the 17th and 18th centuries reappeared in the 20th and again in the early 21st.

Among the episodes discussed is the settlement and brief stay of former Zaporozhian Cossacks in the region. They had been reorganised as the Black Sea Cossack Host under the personal patronage of Prince Grigorii Potemkin, who, in 1790, proclaimed himself hetman of all Cossack hosts of the Russian Empire. Their subsequent relocation to the Kuban in 1792 marked the beginning of a large-scale process of state-sponsored and landlord-driven colonisation of what, in the final decades of the eighteenth century, was known as the Ochakiv Region.

This process gave rise to a multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual environment – one that nearly, though not entirely, submerged the earlier population and its historical memory. The author also speaks about the revival of steppe freedom traditions by local rebel *atamans* during the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1922 and the striking recurrence of these patterns during the revolutionary events of the early twenty-first century in Ukraine.

The author’s overarching conclusion is straightforward (though it might more fittingly have ended not with a period, but with an ellipsis): the transformation of the former “Ukraine” of the Crimean Khanate into an integral part of the ethnic and national space of present-day Ukraine is far from complete and remains an ongoing process (p. 345).

The Notes (pp. 347–392) and **References** (pp. 393–412) reflect the author’s engagement with archival materials from Ukraine, Poland, and Russia, alongside archeographic and historiographical works from the 19th to 21st centuries. Many primary sources appear here for the first time in scholarly circulation.

It should be noted that Dr Hrybovskyi’s source base is largely Eurocentric. Ottoman – and especially Crimean – bureaucratic records are scarce and

mostly survive in translated form (Polish, Russian, or Ukrainian). This lack stems from weak regional administration in the late 17th to 18th centuries. As a result, several decades in the history of Giray's "Ukraine" remain poorly documented, forcing the author to reconstruct events through broader Central and Eastern European contexts.

One of the book's undeniable strengths lies in its inclusion of over one hundred visual sources – maps, engravings, paintings, and photographs – that accompany the text and significantly enhance its informational value. As with the documentary and narrative materials employed in the study, many of these visual items are rare or unique. Of particular interest are the author's own photographs taken during his research trips to the Lower Volga region and Kazakhstan.

In conclusion, we express our confidence that Vladyslav Hrybovskyj's new work, offered to the attention of interested readers, will be received favorably, with interest and high appreciation. It is the result of comprehensive heuristic work with primary sources and careful study of the scientific heritage of the author's predecessors. The ability to offer an analytical interpretation of historical processes and events and, not least, the author's literary talent ensure the book a worthy place among the "classic" studies on the history of the turn of the early modern period.