

# Hadjač 1658: The Origins of a Myth

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In 1920, the prominent Ukrainian historian and political activist Viačeslav Lypyns'kyj (Wacław Lipiński) published a book entitled *Ukraine at the Turning Point*. In it he discussed the dramatic changes brought about in mid-seventeenth century Ukraine by the Xmel'nyc'kyj Uprising (1648), the rise of the Cossack state known in historiography as the Hetmanate, and the ensuing military confrontations, first with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and then with Muscovy. The book was later treated as a manifesto of the 'statist' school of Ukrainian historiography. Among Lypyns'kyj's contributions to the study of the period was the introduction into historiographic discourse of the concept of the Perejaslav Legend – a body of historical myths that developed in the eighteenth century around the Cossack-Muscovite agreement proclaimed in the town of Perejaslav in January 1654. The agreement, formalized during the Cossack delegation's visit to Moscow in March of the same year, established the tsar's protectorate over the Cossack polity led by Hetman Bohdan Xmel'nyc'kyj. Lypyns'kyj argued that by presenting the Perejaslav Agreement as an act of voluntary union between the Little Russian (Ukrainian) nation and the Muscovite state, whose Orthodox religion it shared, the eighteenth-century Cossack elites eased the process of integration into the Russian Empire for themselves but compromised the interests of their state and opened the door to the creation of the concept of an all-Russian nation<sup>1</sup>.

What Lypyns'kyj left out of his analysis were the ever-changing political circumstances under which the Perejaslav Legend functioned in Ukraine after the defeat of Hetman Ivan Mazepa's revolt against Tsar Peter I. Twenty years after the Battle of Poltava (1709), the Perejaslav myth provided historical ammunition for Cossack attempts to restore the "rights and privileges" guaranteed by the "Articles of Bohdan Xmel'nyc'kyj". That myth helped the Cossack elites restore not only some of their own rights and privileges but also the institution of the hetmancy, abolished by Peter I after the death of Mazepa's successor, Hetman Ivan Skoropads'kyj (1722)<sup>2</sup>. One of the countermyths that never matched the stature of the Perejaslav Legend but was closely linked to it chronologically and contextually was the Cossack narrative of the Union of Hadjač, concluded

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<sup>1</sup> See Lypyns'kyj 1920: 28-29.

<sup>2</sup> On the events of the period and the rise of the cult of Bohdan Xmel'nyc'kyj in the late 1720s, see Plokhy 2002: 45-54.

in September 1658 between Bohdan Xmel'nyc'kyj's successor, Hetman Ivan Vyhovs'kyj, and representatives of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

This narrative proclaimed the creation of the Principality of Rus', headed by the Cossack hetman, and took the first steps toward establishing the Ruthenian nobility as a third partner in the Commonwealth, along with the Polish and Lithuanian nobles. But from the viewpoint of the Cossack state, the Union, as adopted by the Commonwealth Diet, was obviously retrogressive, especially as compared with the conditions offered to the Cossacks by Muscovy only four years earlier. Instead of a *de facto* independent state under the protection of a foreign ruler, the Cossack polity, now called the Principality of Rus', would become a constituent part of the Commonwealth, integrated into its administrative and territorial system. Its territory would be limited to three palatinates of the Commonwealth. The hetman would have no right to engage in diplomatic relations with foreign rulers. The Cossack Host would be cut from sixty thousand to a mere thirty thousand troops. The Cossacks would lose the right to elect the hetman, which would now be reserved to the nobility. The ennoblement of a limited number of Cossack officers on the central and local levels would leave the Cossack rank and file without an elite of their own. This was a far cry from the conditions offered – and largely delivered – by the Treaty of Perejaslav with Muscovy (1654)<sup>3</sup>.

The Union was a disaster for its Ukrainian sponsor, Hetman Ivan Vyhovs'kyj, who succeeded Bohdan Xmel'nyc'kyj in 1657 and was forced to resign in 1659. Vyhovs'kyj was well aware that the Hadjač agreement in the truncated form approved by the Diet was a virtual death sentence for him and his supporters. "You have come with death and brought me death", said Vyhovs'kyj to the Polish envoy who delivered the text of the agreement to him. He himself survived the events that followed the ratification of the treaty, but his closest adviser and initiator of the Union, the general chancellor of the Cossack Host, Jurij Nemyryč, was captured and killed by insurgents who rebelled against the presence of the Polish troops brought to the Hetmanate by Vyhovs'kyj's administration<sup>4</sup>.

Needless to say, the Union had its fair share of critics among Ukrainian scholars. The critical assessment of the Union by Lypyns'kyj and Hruševs'kyj, the two most influential Ukrainian historians of the period, had a profound influence on the interpretation of the events of 1658-59 in twentieth-century Ukrainian historiography<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless, it had to compete with the well-established tradition of treating Hadjač as a largely positive development in Ukrainian his-

<sup>3</sup> On the Union of Hadjač, see Herasymčuk 1909; Stadnyk 1910-11; Lypyns'kyj 1912: 588-617; Hruševs'kyj 1936: 288-359; Tomkiewicz 1937; Kot 1960; Kaczmarczyk 1994: 35-42; Mironowicz, 1997: 149-189; Jakovleva 1998: 305-323. On the proceedings of the 1659 Diet, which approved the Union, see Ochmann-Staniszevska *et al.* 2000: 276-291.

<sup>4</sup> On the negative aspects of the Hadjač Agreement, see Ochmann-Staniszevska *et al.* 2000: 315-318. Cf. Plokhyy, 2001: 62-64.

<sup>5</sup> See Lypyns'kyj 1912: 595-598; Hruševs'kyj 1936: 352-357.

tory. Quite a few Ukrainian political thinkers and historians of the second half of the nineteenth century tended to see the Union of Hadjač as a manifestation of Ukrainian autonomist and federalist aspirations. For example, the leaders of the Ukrainian movement in the Russian Empire, Myxajlo Drahomanov and Volodymyr Antonovyč, were generally positive in their assessment of the Union. And scholars of the younger generation were particularly enthusiastic. Hruševs'kyj's student Vasyl' Herasymčuk saw the Union not only as a major achievement of Ukrainian political thought but also as a step toward Ukrainian independence – a position shared by Ivan Franko, Ukraine's leading literary figure of the period<sup>6</sup>.

There are a number of reasons, both scholarly and political, for the persistence of the positive image of the Union of Hadjač in Ukrainian historiography. The goal of the present article, however, is not to examine those reasons but to look into the origins of the Ukrainian myth of Hadjač. When did it come into existence? What functions did it perform in the historical thinking of the Cossack elites and their Ukrainian heirs? These are the questions I propose to address.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, memories of the Union of Hadjač continued to flourish in Polish-controlled Right-Bank Ukraine. Just as the hetmans of Russian-ruled Left-Bank Ukraine always referred in their negotiations with the Muscovite court to the rights granted the Cossacks at Perejaslav in 1654, so every Right-Bank hetman tried to negotiate a deal reminiscent of the Union of Hadjač with his Polish counterparts<sup>7</sup>. One can only speculate on the role that the Union of Hadjač might have played in Cossack historical writing if it had developed in Right-Bank Ukraine, but Poland suppressed Ukrainian Cossackdom in the Commonwealth before such a tradition had been established there. Instead, the myth of Hadjač took shape in the works of the Left-Bank Cossack chroniclers, who had a generally negative attitude toward the pro-Polish hetmans and their political and diplomatic dealings with Poland.

Roman Rakuška-Romanovs'kyj, a prominent Cossack officer, served both Left-Bank and Right-Bank hetmans. After becoming an Orthodox priest, he wrote the *Eyewitness Chronicle* – the first major monument of Cossack historical writing. Rakuška-Romanovs'kyj, the first Cossack author to address the Hadjač Agreement as a historical subject, listed some of its prominent conditions in his chronicle but gave neither a positive nor a negative assessment of it. His summary of the conditions of the Union is useful for understanding how it was assessed by the Cossack officer elite of the period. Rakuška mentioned the granting of the office of Kyivan palatine to the hetman, the ennoblement of a few hundred Cossack officers in every regiment, and the creation of special

<sup>6</sup> Franko 1900.

<sup>7</sup> Direct references to the Hadjač articles are to be found, for example, in the instructions of Hetman Petro Dorošenko to his representatives at the Ostrih Commission (1670), as well as in the instructions to Polish delegates to the commission. See *Tysiača rokiv* 2001: 56, 63, 67.

courts for the Kyiv, Černihiv and Braclav palatinates, which made it unnecessary to go to Lublin or attend Diet sessions in Warsaw in order to settle legal disputes. It would appear that the Cossack officers expected more from the agreement than it actually delivered, given that the number of Cossacks eligible for ennoblement was limited to one hundred in each regiment. It is also possible that these conditions were exaggerated in retrospect – after all, Rakuška wrote his account of the agreement many years after the event<sup>8</sup>.

By the turn of the eighteenth century, when Rakuška was completing his chronicle, the myth of Hadjač was already in the making. The Union's provisions were half-forgotten and half-exaggerated. The neutral or even positive attitude toward the Union was outweighed by the prevalent negative assessment of the hetmancy of one of its authors, Ivan Vyhovs'kyj. Rakuška-Romanovs'kyj himself treated Vyhovs'kyj as a pro-Polish politician and a traitor to the tsar. For the author of the *Eyewitness Chronicle*, Vyhovs'kyj symbolized "Liakh deceit and Latin depravity" manifested by his takeover of the hetmancy from Bohdan Xmel'nyc'kyj's son Jurij<sup>9</sup>. From Rakuška-Romanovs'kyj on, Cossack historiography portrayed Vyhovs'kyj and his alleged Polonophilism in an extremely negative light. The two contradictory aspects of the Hadjač myth – a positive attitude toward the Union and a negative one toward Vyhovs'kyj – coexisted peacefully, demonstrating the complexity of the world in which the Cossack elites of the Left-Bank Ukraine reinvented their history and identity.

Rakuška-Romanovs'kyj completed the *Eyewitness Chronicle* at the beginning of the eighteenth century, before Ivan Mazepa's revolt against Tsar Peter I in 1708 and the Battle of Poltava (1709). Mazepa's revolt dramatically changed the political atmosphere in the Hetmanate and, by all accounts, promoted the development of the Hadjač myth. The revolt raised the question of an alternative to the tsar's rule in Ukraine. It was approximately at this time that the Cossack officers rediscovered the text of the Hadjač Agreement and began a careful study of its provisions. Mazepa allied himself with Charles XII of Sweden and Stanisław Leszczyński of Poland. Whatever the shortcomings of the Union of Hadjač as compared with the Perejaslav Agreement of 1654, it looked clearly superior to the limited Cossack autonomy that survived under Russian suzerainty in the first decade of the eighteenth century. Once again, the Treaty of Hadjač became attractive to the Hetmanate's elites, which had undergone 'gentrification' in the ensuing half century and were dreaming of the noble status and rights associated with that process.

This new interest in the Union of Hadjač was short-lived, but it found its way into the Cossack chronicles written in the Hetmanate after the Battle of Poltava. Peter's encroachment on Cossack rights and the anti-Polish propaganda

<sup>8</sup> See Dzyra 1971: 81. Cf. the two distinct versions of the Hadjač Agreement in Hruševs'kyj 1936: 334-343. Although the final text of the agreement contains no reference to the Diet, such a provision appears in Wespazjan Kochowski's account of it. See Jakovleva 1998: 433.

<sup>9</sup> See Dzyra 1971: 76.

that he conducted from his new capital of St. Petersburg placed clear restrictions on the chroniclers' ability to express their thoughts on the subject. Nevertheless, it is clearly apparent that the post-Poltava chroniclers paid much more attention to the Union of Hadjač than did Rakuška-Romanovs'kyj prior to Mazepa's revolt. Inspiration for the further development of the Hadjač myth came, not surprisingly, from Polish sources. Particularly influential in this regard was Samuel Twardowski's rhymed chronicle, *The Civil War*, four parts of which appeared in print in 1681<sup>10</sup>. Twardowski discussed the Union in connection with the decisions of the Diet of 1659, which approved the agreement for the Polish side. He believed that the Union had resulted in the creation of a "third Commonwealth" in Ukraine (along with the Polish Kingdom and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania). For his narrative, Twardowski used the agreement as negotiated at Hadjač, not the final draft of the treaty approved by the Diet. Thus he referred to a Cossack Host of sixty thousand, not the thirty thousand stipulated by the Diet's decision. He also listed a provision on the liquidation of the Church Union, although it was reformulated in the final draft of the agreement to save the Uniate Church. Twardowski's characterization of the Cossacks was highly favorable for the most part. He regarded the creation of a "Cossack Commonwealth" in Ukraine as the fulfillment of a prediction allegedly made by the sixteenth-century Polish king Stefan Batory. Twardowski also compared the Cossacks' humble origins with those of the Macedonian Greeks, Romans, Ottomans, and even Polish nobles. He was clearly prepared to accept the Cossack officer elite as an equal partner in the Commonwealth<sup>11</sup>.

It was only to be expected that Twardowski's interpretation of the Hadjač Agreement would appeal to the Cossack chroniclers of the eighteenth century. Samijlo Velyčko, a former secretary in the General Chancellery of the Commonwealth and the most prolific chronicler of the period, used Twardowski's account in his *Relation of the Cossack War with the Poles*, probably written in the 1720s. He translated Twardowski's verses from the Polish and used them almost verbatim, making reference to specific pages of Twardowski's work. Velyčko's own contribution to the story consisted of a recontextualization of the Union of Hadjač, presenting it not as the outcome of the work of the Polish Diet of 1659 (as had Twardowski) but of negotiations conducted at Hadjač in September 1658. Velyčko also supplied a lengthy commentary on the first provision of the agreement about the liquidation of the Church Union, arguing that it was an important measure intended to stop desertions from the Orthodox Church in Polish Ukraine. Finally, Velyčko completely excluded from his account the speech delivered at the Diet by the Cossack representative Jurij Nemyryč. When speaking of the Cossacks returning to the fold of the Polish king, Nemyryč had invoked the story of the prodigal son returning to his father. The first of Velyčko's changes put the agreement into a Ukrainian rather than a Polish historical context, the second strengthened the Union's legitimacy from

<sup>10</sup> Twardowski 1681.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*: 262-265.

the viewpoint of the interests of the Orthodox Church, and the third helped deflect accusations that the Union was a mere surrender of Cossack Ukraine to the king. All these changes notwithstanding, Velyčko's portrayal of Hadjač was inspired and heavily influenced by Twardowski's favorable treatment of the agreement. Like Rakuška-Romanovs'kyj's account, Velyčko's positive assessment of Hadjač coexisted peacefully with his largely negative characterization of Vyhovs'kyj, whom he depicted as a Ruthenian noble "of one spirit with the Poles for the sake of passing vanity and well-being in this world"<sup>12</sup>.

Especially interesting (and important for the present discussion) is the impact of Twardowski's interpretation of the Union of Hadjač on another major Cossack chronicle of the period, Hryhorij Hrab'janka's *The Great War of Bohdan Xmel'nyc'kyj*, apparently written in the 1720s<sup>13</sup>. If Velyčko's chronicle survived in a single copy, Hrab'janka's circulated widely in eighteenth-century Ukraine and became the most influential historical work of the period. Hrab'janka, who was well acquainted with the *Eyewitness Chronicle* and used it in his work, shared Rakuška-Romanovs'kyj's negative attitude to Vyhovs'kyj, calling him "an enemy and a blatant traitor"<sup>14</sup>. But in his discussion of the Union of Hadjač Hrab'janka portrayed Vyhovs'kyj as a victim of the Poles, who had made enticing promises to him. Thus, like Rakuška-Romanovs'kyj and Velyčko, Hrab'janka did not extend his negative characterization of Vyhovs'kyj to his major diplomatic undertaking, the Union of Hadjač. He clearly liked the main ideas of the agreement and supplied additional details that enhanced his positive assessment of the Union. Some of those details were mere figments of the rich imagination of the Cossack elites, which were prepared to see much more in the Union than it had actually offered their forefathers.

Twardowski's work influenced Hrab'janka's chronicle no less profoundly than it had affected Velyčko's *Relation*. In some cases, Hrab'janka was even less critical of his source than Velyčko. For example, he failed to reconceptualize the history of the Union of Hadjač, introducing it to the reader in connection with the proceedings of the Warsaw Diet of 1659, exactly as Twardowski had done. Not unlike Velyčko, Hrab'janka used Twardowski's account of the conditions of the Union as the basis for his own account of the agreement. He also quoted from Twardowski's praise of the Cossacks, comparing their background to that of the ancient Greeks, Romans, Turks, and Poles. Unlike Velyčko, however, Hrab'janka never named his source. He also introduced many more changes into Twardowski's account than had Velyčko. Hrab'janka dropped not only the account of Nemyryč's speech to the Diet but also the provision of the agreement that obliged the Cossacks to conduct a defensive war against Muscovy, as well as the amnesty to the Cossacks who had sided with the Swedes during their invasion of the Commonwealth. If Hrab'janka's failure to mention Nemyryč can

<sup>12</sup> See Velyčko 1926: 166, 184-186.

<sup>13</sup> On the time of writing of the chronicle, its author and his sources, see Lutsenko 1990.

<sup>14</sup> See Hrab'janka 1990: 378.

be explained by the same reasons as Velyčko's, the other two changes reflect the new political sensitivities of post-Poltava Ukraine. In the wake of the defeat at Poltava, Hrab'janka did not want to draw attention to the history of Cossack-Muscovite antagonisms or to past Cossack alliances with the Swedish king<sup>15</sup>.

If Hrab'janka altered Twardowski's version of the treaty to eliminate items that he did not want his readers to know or remember, his additions to the text of the agreement give a good indication of what he wanted the Union of Hadjač to represent. First of all, Hrab'janka introduced the concept of the Grand Principality of Rus' – a notion absent from Twardowski's work and probably borrowed from another Polish source, Wespazjan Kochowski's *Climacters*<sup>16</sup>. Thus Hrab'janka referred to the Cossack hetman of the agreement (that is, Ivan Vyhovs'kyj) variously in his text as hetman of the Grand Principality of Rus'-Ukraine, hetman of the Ruthenian nation, and Ukrainian or Little Russian hetman. Hrab'janka also added to Twardowski's text of the agreement the ideologically important statement that the Cossacks were joining the Commonwealth as "free men with free men and equals with equals", a formula that had entered Ruthenian political discourse in the first half of the seventeenth century and remained important in the eighteenth. Now, however, it was reintroduced to establish that the Cossack elites had enjoyed special rights under the Polish kings and to claim those rights from the Russian tsars. The same purpose underlay another of Hrab'janka's additions to Twardowski's text – the statement that the king himself had signed the conditions of the Union, and then, as was the custom among monarchs, both sides had sworn to the agreement. Given the controversy over the refusal of the tsar's envoys at Perejaslav to swear an oath in the name of the sovereign, this addition was also politically significant<sup>17</sup>.

The addition of Hrab'janka's that had the most lasting impact on subsequent historiography and led to confusion in nineteenth-century historical writing pertained to the origins of the Hadjač Agreement. In his chronicle, Hrab'janka claimed that the agreement had originally been submitted to the Poles by none other than Bohdan Xmel'nyc'kyj (the hetman's first name was not given in the chronicle, but "Xmel'nyc'kyj" was Hrab'janka's standard form of reference to him)<sup>18</sup>. Whether this was taken from a written source, garbled, or invented outright, it helped Hrab'janka argue his case that the Union indicated the Poles' acceptance of a treaty originally proposed by the Cossacks. That could well explain why the Cossacks ultimately fell for a Polish trap. However, in Hrab'janka's scheme of things, neither the canniness of the Poles nor Cossack naiveté nor even treason on the part of Vyhovs'kyj could undermine the good ideas put into agreement by Bohdan Xmel'nyc'kyj. The reference to Xmel'nyc'kyj, whose cult as hero and savior of Little Russia reached its peak in the 1720s, could not

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*: 379-381.

<sup>16</sup> See Kochowski 1683. For a nineteenth-century Polish translation of Kochowski's work, see Kochowski 1859: vol. 1: 363-365.

<sup>17</sup> See Hrab'ianka 1990: 379-380.

<sup>18</sup> See Dzyra 1971: 80-81; Twardowski 1681: 262-263.

but add legitimacy to the Union of Hadjač<sup>19</sup>. Another factor that bolstered the reputation of the Hadjač Agreement in post-Poltava Ukraine was the opposition to the Union on the part of the Catholic hierarchy, registered by Twardowski and duly repeated by Hrab'janka. In general, Hrab'janka portrayed the Hadjač Agreement in a way that shielded it from accusations of disloyalty to the tsar or betrayal of the Orthodox Church<sup>20</sup>.

This was especially important, given that Hrab'janka presented the Union of Hadjač as a viable alternative – and, one might conclude after comparing his texts of the Perejaslav and Hadjač treaties, a more attractive one – to the Perejaslav Agreement. The elites of the Hetmanate were fed up with Muscovite encroachment on their rights and privileges, which culminated in the abolition of the hetmancy in 1722 and the introduction of direct rule by the Little Russian College. They looked to history for alternatives to Russian rule, and the Union of Hadjač certainly fit the bill. Hrab'janka's interpretation of Hadjač had a strong impact on the formation of Ukrainian historical identity in the Hetmanate. His chronicle was extremely popular among the Cossack elites, but even more popular were different variants of its condensed version, known as the *Brief Description of Little Russia*<sup>21</sup>. Together they contributed to the formation of a Hadjač myth that represented the Polish-Cossack agreement of 1658 as an alternative to Perejaslav and helped form an identity rooted not only in Little Russia's experience under the tsars but also in its long tradition of existence under Polish kings.

This interpretation of Hadjač had little to do with the actual text of the treaty, which curtailed the Hetmanate's rights and Cossack liberties – a reality so obvious to Vyhovs'kyj and his contemporaries. The popularity of the myth of Hadjač can be properly understood only in the context of historical writing and the politics of memory. That myth was created and kept alive by generations of chroniclers and historians who desperately searched the past for an alternative to Russian rule. Despite the numerous flaws of the Hadjač Agreement, which were particularly glaring when compared with the Perejaslav Agreement of 1654, it eventually began to be seen as a viable alternative to Perejaslav and, even more importantly, to the subsequent Cossack-Muscovite treaties, which further curtailed the fragile autonomy of Ukraine.

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<sup>19</sup> See Plokyh 2002: 45-54; cf. Plokyh 2006: 348-350.

<sup>20</sup> See Hrab'ianka 1990: 378-381.

<sup>21</sup> On the popularity of Hrab'janka's chronicle and the *Brief Description of Little Russia*, see Apanovič 1983: 137-201; Bovhyrja 2004: 340-363.



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