
Ascetic Activity of Fyodor Tumansky in the Context of
Popularisation of Ukrainian Studies on the Territory of the
Russian Empire in the Late 18th and Early 19th Centuries*

Ascetyczna aktywność Fiodora Tumanskiego w kontekście popularyzacji studiów
ukraińskich na terytorium imperium rosyjskiego końca XVIII – początku XIX wieku

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Abstract. The objective of the paper is the analysis of historical literature in order to trace the basic ways of promoting Ukrainian studies in the western territories of the Russian Empire in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It has been established that this process has been supported by the Ukrainian elite, who were keen to address the problems of Ukrainian identity. In this context, the activities of progressive Ukrainians in academic and literary institutions, publishing houses, as well as various organisations and associations were characterised. The author also showcased the scientific and literary activity of Fyodor Tumansky, a well-known publisher, historian and journalist, who had an irrefutable influence on the development of Ukrainian culture (and national idea) at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries within the framework of the complex conditions of imperial reality. The paper

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outlines his contribution to the early phase of the Ukrainian national revival, which was brought about by artistic, scientific, publishing, and educational activities, as well as journalism, aimed at collecting and disseminating knowledge about Ukrainian history.

Keywords: Fyodor Tumansky, historical literature, Ukraine, Ukrainian elite, Ukrainian national revival, Russia

Abstrakt. Celem artykułu jest analiza literatury historycznej w celu prześledzenie podstawowych sposobów popularyzacji studiów ukrainistycznych na zachodnich terytoriach rosyjskiego imperium pod koniec XVIII i na początku XIX wieku. Ustalono, że proces ten zyskał wsparcie dzięki elicie ukraińskiej, żywo zajmującej się problemami tożsamości ukraińskiej. W tym kontekście scharakteryzowano działalność postępowych Ukraińców w instytucjach naukowych i literackich, ośrodkach wydawniczych, różnych organizacjach i stowarzyszeniach. Pokazano również aktywność naukową i literacką Fiodora Tumanskiego, znanego wydawcy, historyka, dziennikarza, który miał niebywały wpływ na rozwój kultury ukraińskiej (i idei narodowej) na przełomie XVIII i XIX wieku, w złożonych warunkach imperialnej rzeczywistości. Omówiono jego wkład w początkową fazę ukraińskiego odrodzenia narodowego, które dokonywało się przez działania artystyczne, naukowe, wydawnicze, dziennikarskie i edukacyjne, mające na celu gromadzenie i rozpowszechnianie wiedzy o historii Ukrainy.

Słowa kluczowe: Fiodor Tumanski, literatura historyczna, Ukraina, ukraińska elita, ukraińskie odrodzenie narodowe, Rosja

One of the systemically important factors for accumulating an array of knowledge on Ukrainian history in the late 18th – early 19th centuries was the popularisation of Ukrainian themes in the empire-wide territories. That process was facilitated by the activities of immigrants from Ukraine in Russian scientific and literary institutions, book publishing centres and societies, which included, in particular, the Society of Friends of Philology, the Free Society of Lovers of Russian Literature in St. Petersburg, the Society of History and Antiquities at Moscow University, the Academy of Sciences and Archaeographic Circles of Aleksei Musin-Pushkin and Nikolai Rumiantsev in Moscow (Kravčenko, 1996a, p. 28; Kocur and Demočko, 2002, p. 228; Kolesnik, 1993). The economic status of the Ukrainian representatives of the imperial elite also enabled them to promote patronage activities in the field of science and culture. Such high-ranking tsarist nobles as Petro Zavadovskiy, Oleksandr Bezborodko, Dmytro Troshchynskiy provided support to their fellow-countrymen, researchers of native history, literature and folklore, and artists (Gubic'kij, 2003, p. 52; Kocur and Demočko, 2002, p. 229). In the constellation of the most progressive representatives of the empire-wide culture, the names of Ukrainians by origin deserve special attention: writers Vasyl Kapnist, Vasyl Narizhnyi, Ivan Bohdanovych; artists Dmytro Levytskyi, Anton Losenko, Volodymyr Borovykovskiy; composers Maksym Berezovskiy, Dmytro Bortnianskyi, Artem Vedel; sculptor Ivan Martos; educators Hryhorii Kozytskyi, Yakov Kozelskyi, and others (Derbov, 1987, p. 4, 22, 27; Predtečenskij, 1957, p. 57;

Pricak, 1993). Ukrainian literary figures and artists opened up new prospects for the imperial culture, enriching it with ideas of Slavic unity, elements of ethnic and regional diversity of the Russian Empire, and the like.

The influence of the Ukrainian subject matter on the creation of Russian culture was significant. That process was revealingly characterised by Prince Nikolai Trubeckoj, one of the leaders of Eurasianism, who once argued that the culture of Russia was a continuation of not Moscow, but Kyiv culture, and the Ukrainisation of the intellectual and spiritual space of the empire became a bridge for its Europeanization (Trubeckoj, 1927). Thus, penetrating deeply into the imperial cultural environment, Ukrainians accelerated the process of integration and global influence of Ukrainian culture on the maturation of Russian national identity.

The resettlement of talented Ukrainian youth to St. Petersburg and Moscow at the beginning of the 19th century had a noticeable impact on the development of the scientific and cultural life of the empire (*Narisi...*, 1994, p. 33; Kravčenko, 1996a, p. 28). According to Vitalii Sarbej, who relied on the results of an analysis of a significant array of memoirs, already in the late 18th century, St. Petersburg was the centre for many educated Ukrainians who in many ways came to the imperial capital to pursue a career in the public service or in the field of literature, science and culture (Sarbej, 1999, p. 66). Thus, Yevhen Hrebinka, a poet and writer of Ukrainian origin who lived in St. Petersburg in the first decades of the 19th century and communicated there with many compatriots, wrote in one of his letters to Ukraine: “Petersburg is a colony of educated Ukrainians – all public places, all academies, all universities are flooded with compatriots...” [“Петербург є колонія освічених українців – усі громадські місця, всі академії, всі університети наводнені земляками...”] (Sarbej, 1999, p. 66; Supronûk, 1997, p. 39; Kogut, 1996, p. 213). In turn, Dmitro Doroshenko noted that the Ukrainian elite was encouraged to integrate into the capital not only due to career motives but also due to the wide scope of imperial life and participation in building the great empire of peoples. In the opinion of the Ukrainians, it should have become a protection for their own homeland weakened by centuries of exertion (Dorošenko, 1996, p. 46).

Together with the already mentioned influential officials – Bezborodko and Troshchynskyi – the circle of Ukrainians in St. Petersburg also included: Hryhorii Kalynovskyi, Vasyl Ruban, Fyodor Tumansky, Mykhailo Antonovskyi, Yakiv Markovych Jr. and many others (Predtečenskij, 1957, pp. 53–55; Kolesnik, 2000, p. 224). Communicating with each other in the service and in private, they often united into associations of Ukrainian fellow-countrymen (*gminas*) and thus created their own cultural and scientific stratum in the imperial capital.

An integral factor in the development of Ukrainian historical and socio-political thought in the territory of the imperial capital was the publishing activity of the elite

imbued with the problems of Ukrainian national identity. As Sarbej justly noted, in this case, there is no reference to a specific topographic point where certain groups of Ukrainians lived and Ukrainian books and journals were published (Sarbej, 1999, p. 66). Due to the specifics of imperial politics, the publication of sources on the history of Ukraine laid the foundation for such an approach, according to which they were considered as the source basis of all-Russian history. Although the majority of Ukrainian collectors and publishers found themselves in conditions under which historical works were written and published in Russian and within the ideology of loyalty, they were still marked by local patriotism and pride in the past of their homeland. Thus, this area of publishing effectively contributed to the dissemination of knowledge on Ukrainian history and culture and the accumulation of documentary sources.

Fyodor Tumansky (1757–1810), a well-known publisher, journalist, historian, archaeographer, and ethnographer, a prominent representative of the regional Ukrainian culture of the late 18th – early 19th century (Žurba, 2003a, p. 124; Kalakura, 2004, p. 152), was actively involved in publishing and made a significant contribution to the Ukrainian national revival. Tumansky's life journey and creative career are indicative for understanding the mechanisms of inclusion of the Ukrainians in the imperial spiritual space and the determination of their role in the formation of Ukrainian culture as well as the popularisation of knowledge on Ukrainian history.

Tumansky discovered his penchant for creative writing at the University of Königsberg (1773–1778) where he attended lectures by leading German professors and received a thorough foreign education (Dzūba, 2001). Although the subject of the researcher's creative aspirations was Ukraine, he mainly associated their realisation with the St. Petersburg literary and scientific world, connecting to its projects, using its intellectual, organisational, and financial resources. This was not an accidental phenomenon, since at the end of the 18th century, the pace of growth of the intellectual environment in St. Petersburg and the complexity of its forms of existence created a powerful force of attraction and a great demand for well-educated scientific brainpower and writers.

The stimulus for Tumansky's scientific work, particularly the field of history, was his direct involvement in the structure of the Academy of Sciences. He first joined such a project in 1779, when Petro Bohdanovych, a resident of St. Petersburg, originally from Poltava, launched the publication of the scientific journal *Akademicheskiiia Izvestiia* [*Academic Proceedings*] at the Academy of Sciences¹ (Žurba, 2003a, p. 126). When forming the composition of the team of contributors, the publisher invited not only members of the Academy, but also his fellow countrymen. Tumansky was among them. He participated in the literary

¹ Translated from Russian (the second half of the 18th century).

section of the *Academic Proceedings* journal and established personal scientific contacts with the most reputable researchers of the time.

However, the great potential of Tumansky's scientific activity was first revealed in his translation activities. Since there was a shortage of qualified translators in such centres as the *Sobraniie, staraiushcheiesia o perevode inostrannykh knig* [*Assembly Committed to the Translation of Foreign Books*], the participation of the young writer in journal and translation projects, in which the leading figures of the Academy played a major role, was decisive for the election of Tumansky as a Corresponding Member of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences on 12 October 1779 (Žurba, 2003a, pp. 126–127). He accepted the awarded title with enthusiasm and significantly exceeded the duties assigned to the corresponding members, thus, acting as a real reformer not only of the scientific and educational life of Ukraine but also of the organisational structure of the Academy.

On 6 December 1779, Tumansky submitted to Petro Rumiantsev, President of the Little Russian Collegium, a programme of a comprehensive survey of Ukraine from historical, ethnographic and geographic points of view, and began searching for and collecting manuscript sources to study the Ukrainian past (Kravčenko, 1996b, pp. 74–75; Vasilenko, 1894; Kalakura, 2004, p. 152). It is worth noting that in the programme of 1779, for the first time in Ukrainian historical science, the proclamation of criticism of sources is an integral and obligatory element of scientific work.

Another project by Tumansky related to the creation of the Academic Assembly in Hlukhiv – a kind of Little Russian branch of the Academy of Sciences located in the capital, which was an important attempt to raise research in Ukrainian history to a higher professional level (Ogloblin, 1953; Žurba, 2003a, p. 131). Although the plan for its creation was welcomed by the director of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, it remained an idea. It is most probable that one of the decisive factors in the failure to implement Tumansky's global scientific and cultural plans was the administrative reforms of 1781, which turned Hlukhiv into a province and, thereby, shifted the interest of the Ukrainian nobility from educational and scientific projects to addressing urgent everyday problems related to obtaining positions and integrating into new administrative centres.

According to Oleg Zhurba, the very plan of the Academic Assembly in Hlukhiv on the eve of the all-Russian educational reform testifies to the readiness of Ukrainian society to establish educational institutions of the general imperial standard (Žurba, 2003a, p. 131). To a certain extent, this point of view expands the position of Volodimir Borisenko, another contemporary researcher. According to him, the introduction of public schools in the Dnipro Region put an end to the “national school of Ukraine and began to impose educational institutions that are

alien in spirit” [“національною школою України й розпочато насаджування чужих за духом навчальних закладів”] (Borisenko, 1996, p. 361).

After Tumansky realised the impossibility of implementing his numerous ambitious plans in Ukraine, he moved to St. Petersburg in 1785. In 1785–1794, in addition to active official and public work, he conducted extensive activities in the field of journalism and literature, as well as in the field of scientific archaeographic and historical research (Žurba, 2003b, p. 120). A whole collection of diverse printed works by Tumansky, with which he is associated as an author, editor, translator, or publisher, indicates the huge amount of work done within a short period of time and the variety of his interests.

In terms of coverage of Ukrainian history, most of the material on this issue were contained in the specialized journal *Rossiiskii magazin* [*Russian Magazine*],² with which Tumansky completed his scientific career in St. Petersburg (Polons'ka-Vasilenko, 1992, p. 286; Žurba, 2003b, pp. 122–123; Kravčenko, 1996b, p. 75). And although the periodical was one of the first Russian historical journals, it also fully represented the Ukrainian spiritual and cultural space.

In 1792–1793, it began extensive publication of sources and research on the history of the Hetmanate, among which the *Manifest getmana Bogdana Khmel' nitskogo* [*The Manifesto of Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytskyi*]³ (*Bila Tserkva*), *Letopisets Mal'ia Rossii* [*The Chronicle of Little Russia*],⁴ *Letopis H. Hrabianki* [*H. Hrabianka Chronicle*],⁵ and others were of particular interest (Dorošenko, 1996, pp. 61–62, 29; Bovgirâ, 2003, p. 76; Kalakura, 2004, p. 152; Gruševskij, 1934, p. 220). As for the latter work, it should be noted that in this way numerous historians and lovers of Ukrainian antiquity gained access to one of the most important monuments of Cossack historiography, which determined the development of Ukrainian historical thought throughout almost the entire 18th century, and which the historian himself recognised as the best of all Ukrainian chronicles known to him.

Thus, while staying in the imperial capital, Tumansky found his place in its spiritual world, and also, thanks to his journalistic activities, he became one of the leaders of the intellectual life of the Russian Empire in the late 18th century. In 1786, in St. Petersburg, a group of scientists united around him: they formed a new educational centre and used Tumansky's journals for their publications. The most informative, serious, and influential publication was the journal *Zerkalo sveta* [*Mirror of the World*]⁶ (Žurba, 2003b, p. 124; Sarbej, 1999, p. 66). After his

² *Ibidem.*

³ *Ibidem.*

⁴ *Ibidem.*

⁵ *Ibidem.*

⁶ *Ibidem.*

resignation (1801), Tumansky returned to Hlukhiv where he continued his scientific and public activities. During that period, he wrote his famous work entitled *Zapiska na oboronu dvorianskikh prav malorossiiskago dvorianstva* [*Note on the Defence of the Noble Rights of the Little Russian Nobility*]⁷ (Pricak, 1993, p. 65).

It should be noted that Tumansky became the first of a cohort of Ukrainian patriots who preceded the archaeological, literary and historiographical initiatives and plans of Oleksandr Bezborodko, Andriian Chepa, Vasyl Poletyka, Yakov Markovych and others. He focused not only on the creation of a complete history of Ukraine, which had already been represented by the Cossack chronicles but also primarily on the creation of a scientific one, which would meet the latest requirements for the development of historical research.

In general, Tumansky's literary and scientific activity represents the typical path of progressive Ukrainians who actively used the potential of their career-related aspirations to spread and popularise the topics of Ukrainian Studies in the empire. Thanks to active communication with the scientific community in St. Petersburg, Tumansky managed to productively integrate the potential of the Ukrainian intellectual and cultural heritage into the empire-wide literary and scientific world.

Translated into English: Viktoriia Loboda

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⁷ Translated from Russian (the beginning of the 19th century).

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