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# Еластична

ПОДІЛЬСЬКА ШЛЯХТА

в другій половині XIV – 70-х роках

XVI століття

# спільнота



Київ Темпора 2012

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## ЗМІСТ

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Від автора .....	ix
Вступ .....	xi

### Розділ I ДЖЕРЕЛА ТА ІСТОРИОГРАФІЯ 1

1. Історіографія .....	1
2. Джерела .....	16

### Розділ II ПОДІЛЛЯ В ДРУГІЙ ПОЛОВИНІ XIV ст. БРАТИ КОРІАТОВИЧІ ТА СПИТКО З МЕЛЬШТИНА 28

1. Спільне правління братів Коріатовичів на Поділлі (1340-ві – 1394 рр.): структура оточення .....	28
2. Васальні стосунки князів Коріатовичів із Казимиром III та Людовиком Угорським .....	47
3. Спитко з Мельштина – «новий князь» на Поділлі .....	63

### Розділ III ІНКОРПОРАЦІЯ ЗАХІДНОГО ПОДІЛЛЯ ДО СКЛАДУ КОРОНИ ПОЛЬСЬКОЇ. ВІД ОСОБИСТОГО ДОМЕНУ КОРОЛЯ ДО ПОДІЛЬСЬКОГО ВОЄВОДСТВА 76

1. Ягайло проти Вітовта: боротьба за Поділля у 1400–1434 рр. ....	78
1.1. Свидригайло. Нетривале правління .....	78
1.2. Перший період Ягайлового володіння (1402–1411). Особисті слуги короля .....	84

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2. Під владою Вітовта. Останній володар Великого Поділля перед 1569 р. ....	97
3. Повернення під владу короля (1430–1434) .....	107

## Розділ IV

## НЕКОРОНОВАНИ ВОЛОДАРИ ПОДІЛЛЯ – ПАНИ З БУЧАЧА 117

1. Кар'єра синів і онуків Міхала Авданця .....	118
2. Подільський маєток панів з Бучача .....	126
3. Служба королю чи собі? Міжнародні справи .....	136
4. Особисті стосунки з господарями. Прихисток політичним емігрантам з Молдавського князівства на Поділлі .....	144
5. Слуги і клієнти .....	151
6. Генеалогія роду та родинні зв'язки панів з Бучача (кін. XIV – поч. XVII ст.) .....	169

## Розділ V

## НОВІ ЧАСИ – НОВІ ЛЮДИ

## (друга половина XV – перша половина XVI ст.) 175

1. Подільська шляхетська корпорація у другій половині XV ст. ....	175
2. Феномен Ярмолинських на Поділлі .....	195
3. Служила шляхта. Хто і звідки прийшов на Поділля .....	201
4. Від ротмістра до подільського шляхтича .....	204
5. Зміна соціального статусу. Від міщан до шляхтичів .....	208
5.1. Кар'єра Амброзія Ормянчика .....	210
6. Сілезька діаспора. Миколай Іскшицький та Бернард Претвич .....	213
7. Урядники середньої ланки. Уряди за службу .....	221
8. Прибутковий Хмільник для Струсів, Лянцкоронських, Тарновських, Мелецьких .....	227
9. Шляхта на службі хмільницького старости і замку .....	236
10. Рів–Бар. Від східного маєтку Одровонжів до жовнірської столиці .....	248
11. Лянцкоронські. Нове дихання для родини на сході .....	256
12. Служба при старості. Приклад кар'єри кам'янецького підстарости Яна Срочицького .....	262

## Розділ VI

## ЕЛАСТИЧНА СПІЛЬНОТА 274

1. Подільська шляхта як корпорація у часовому розрізі .....	274
1.1. Перший період (середина XIV – перша третина XV ст.) .....	276
1.2. Другий період (1430-ті – кінець XV ст.) .....	280

1.3. Третій період (поч. XVI – 1570-ті роки) .....	286
2. Означення подільянами своєї території на 60-ті роки XVI ст. ....	290
3. Структура подільської шляхетської корпорації (60-ті роки XVI ст.) .....	299
3.1. Вищі урядники .....	301
3.2. Середня і дрібна шляхта та їхні слуги .....	309
 Висновки .....	 320
 <i>Наталя Яковенко. Імениті й безіменні на околиці Європи (Післямова) .....</i>	 <i>324</i>

## ДОДАТКИ

Itinerarium подільських воєвод, каштелянів і старост у пізньому Серед- ньовіччі (до початку XVI ст.) .....	328
 Іменний покажчик .....	 357
Географічний покажчик .....	393
Список скорочень .....	408
Список використаних джерел та літератури .....	411
 SUMMARY (англ.) .....	 434
STRESZCZENIE (пол.) .....	442

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ELASTIC COMMUNITY. PODOLIAN NOBILITY  
FROM THE MID-14<sup>th</sup> CENTURY  
THROUGH THE 70s OF THE 16<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

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The period of the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century became a time when Podolia stood out, when this territory entered the historical scene as one of the most interesting contact zones in Europe of that time. Having been named Podolia (Ukrainian: Podillya), which most probably comes from *dil* – *down* the city of Halych, the territory served as the arena where local population struggled against Tatars, and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania fought against the Polish Crown. This resulted in the partition of the territory into the Western Podolia and the Eastern Podolia in the 30s of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Such a compromise significantly influenced the further history of the area.

The location of the territory on the margins of partially-wooded steppe and steppe regions pre-determined the history of Podolia as the story of a borderland, the place where not only one climatic and geographical region merged with the other, but also where the comprehensible Europe of that time ended. Not without a reason was Podolia indicated as the last European province on the border with Asia in the majority of maps of the 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. This was the place where the West fearlessly faced the East, because the former knew the latter, interacted with the latter, and coexisted with it.

It is very easy to determine the Southern boundary of Podolia – it ran through the valley of the Dniester River, a centuries-old border between the Slavs and the Dako-Thracian population of the Dniester and the Prut rivers' interfluvium. The Northern border ran along the watershed of the Southern Buh River and the rivers of the Prypiat river basin, at the very beginning of the forest climatic and geographical region. Most probably the Dnieper River could be considered the Eastern border of the greater Podolia. However, its Western border is the most difficult to determine, since in the case of the Western border one has to deal with many borders – the ethnographic one reached the present-day cities of Zolochiv and Berezhany and the different administrative one that functioned

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during the time of Podolian Principality and Podolian Voivodeship. In fact, the “great” internal divide also existed between the Western and the Eastern Podolias. It was imposed during the 30s of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and had been functioning till the second partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1793.

The time period considered in this study covers the timeline of over two centuries long, starting from the first written accounts of the Koriatovych brothers’ emergence in this part of Europe around the 40s-60s of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and ending with the death of the last Jagiellon Sigismund II Augustus in 1572. During these two hundreds of years Podolia had been under the rule of many supreme sovereigns. Władysław II Jagiełło conclusively tied the Western Podolia to his new state. The rule of his sons, Władysław III and Casimir IV, incorporated this territory into the Polish Crown as a full-fledged administrative unit. The succeeding rulers of the Western Podolia or, more precisely, of the Podolian Voivodeship, John I Albert, Alexander and Sigismund I the Old, in fact governed over the frontier territory, a certain *antemurale Christianum*. The attempts to reform the kingdom undertaken by Sigismund II Augustus closed the notorious “golden age” of “old good history” and passed the baton to another epoch and different kind of rulers. At the time, the participation of local nobility in the life of the country reached its apogee and therefore the historians coined this time a nobles’ democracy. The next epoch of the elected rulers was characterized by a decreasing level of nobility’s participation in decision making.

The book consists of six chapters. The first one describes the sources and historiography. It reviews the major works up to date that attempted to draw the history of the Western Podolia. The part of the chapter, which presents the main source groups, includes general characteristics of the types of sources used in the current study. It is worth to note that this chapter does not list all the sources cited in respective parts of the book. Many source-related nuances are explicated in the footnotes.

The second chapter focuses on the Podolian Principality at the time of the Koriatovych Brothers’ rule (from the end of the 40s of the 14<sup>th</sup> century through 1394). Based on the analysis of the prince’s documents known today, the chapter generates a description of the prince’s associates. Special attention is paid to feudatory relations of the princes and the kings Casimir III The Great and Louis I of Hungary that help understand the course of the events at that time. The chapter provides an explanation of the Lithuanian dynastic princes Gediminids’ departure from the extended family and failure to come to an agreement with Jogaila after 1386 despite their prominent role in the Kraków enthroning of the latter. A separate paragraph presents the story of the voievoda of Kraków Spytko of Melsztyn, a “new prince” of Podolia in 1395–1399.

The third chapter is dedicated to a protracted incorporation of Podolia to the Polish Crown during the first third of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. At this time the nobles started the process of rooting and organizing themselves into a local nobility corporation.

The fourth chapter provides the success history of the Podolian rulers in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the family of the possessors (lords) of Buchach, who, given the scale of their activity, could have created their own autonomous principality if they had been born princes.

The fifth chapter demonstrates the shift in priorities and the new nomenclature of local nobility names. The introduction of the military elements in the 70s of the 15<sup>th</sup> century aimed at border surveillance led to the emergence of a new kind of people in Podolia coming both from the inside and the outside of the area. The chapter addresses the newcomers who pursued their luck at the South-Eastern border of the Kingdom, and also the lower level nobility, the information about whom became available only after the emergence of mass sources in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century.

The closing sixth chapter uses numerous examples to explicate the peculiarities of the elastic community, the Podolian nobility in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> through the 60s of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Three separate periods, the specific chronological slices that provide for the possibility to make intermediate conclusions, are segregated. Special attention is paid to the way the local nobility imagined their territory and to the extent this mental fashioning might serve as the first manifestations of local Podolian regionalism. The sampled career paths of the higher district officials in the voivodeship demonstrate that the militarization of the territory was probably the most significant factor in the social life of the area and served well to advance the careers. Based on the analysis of the requisitions registers the chapter showcases the structure of the Podolian voivodeship noble society.

The appendix includes the itineraries of Podolian voivodes, castellans and mayors (Polish: *starosta*, Latin: *capitaneus*) in the Late Medieval Age.

The elastic community of Podolia began to form as far back as the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century. Podolia appeared the territory that accepted various social practices and clustered together people from different parts of the world; it was the land where they all looked for and found home and where they created the Podolian nobility corporation.

The Podolian rule of the Koriatovychs showcased the transferring of the Lithuanian governance practices to the Ruthenian lands. By the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, after having affirmed themselves in this part of Europe, the Koriatovychs carried out quite successful internal and foreign policies. From the 50s through

80s of the 14th century, as they came to understand the difficulties of being independent, the Koriatovychs masterfully maneuvered in the maze of vassal relationships with the Polish King Casimir III The Great, his successor Louis I of Hungary, as well as his daughter Jadwiga of Poland. Only the coming to throne of Jogaila's relative accentuated the need to choose a suzerain and changed the further history of the Principality.

The change of status and the "outlandish" ownership of Podolia by Spytko presumably disturbed a quiet process of Koriatovychs' determination and selection of patron, as at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Podolia became the stone of contention between the Polish Crown and the Great Lithuanian Principality. A short rule of Švitrigaila during the 1400-1401 and his escape to The State of the Teutonic Order, which was among the major external adversary for both the Polish Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, exasperated Władysław II Jagiełło to the extent that he initiated the process of incorporation of Podolia to his own royal domain first, and later its incorporation to the Polish Crown.

His complicated relations with Vytautas the Great forced Władysław II Jagiełło to grant Podolia to the Lithuanian Prince for lifelong ownership after the victory of Grunwald in 1410. To Podolia, it was the last period of being under a single ruler and a uniform legal system.

Vytautas the Great's death at the end of 1430 and the local nobility's (Ruthenian and Polish) active participation in the life of the area, as well as the warfare of the beginning of the 30s of the 15<sup>th</sup> century led to the emergence of the Podolian Principality in a body of the Polish Crown in 1434. The city of Kamianets as a natural citadel became the administrative center of the newly created administrative unit.

The period of Władysław II Jagiełło's sons Władysław and Casimir's rule was the time of documenting of the land ownership at the territory of the newly created voivodeship. The serving nobles from all the parts of the Crown were receiving the property rights for Podolian villages as remuneration for providing their services to the King. This contributed to the emergence of the illusion of Western Podolia being colonized by strangers. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the mass sources explicate those boyars who served at the border for several generations and were at the frontline defending the border from Tatar and Moldovan attacks. These were the people who embodied the larger part of the Podolian nobility.

In addition to the appearance of a great number of new subjects, the 16<sup>th</sup> century brought out new rules of social relations. The Alexander's Statute of 1505 that put a ban on the King domain land assignation led to the involvement of the Podolian nobility in the executorial movement. The withdrawal of the old magnates and the arrival of the new ones caused the reformatting of



local elites and local nobility circles, which gradually shifted their focus away from the King and the highest state officials and turned primarily to the crown and the field crown hetmans. This process substantially accelerated after local dietines (*sejmik*) had been normalized in the 70s of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The life of Podolian noblemen at the border and of the border (considering quite a profit they were making) imposed certain identifications on the local nobility corporation. The bulk of shared behaviors and characteristics allowed them to build a group identity of the members of a so-called elastic community – the community of people open to new members, new rules of the game, new life circumstances. This community was fast in responding to the challenges coming from both the West and the East. The elastic community formed new internal social groups, such as professional communities of warriors and robbers. The contact zone of the frontier gave them a chance to succeed in socialization as well as in earning money.

Speaking of the social structure of the Podolian nobility, one can provisionally segregate several periods of its transformation. The first period was the time when, in addition to the princes, the Podolian principality also consisted of boyars and zem'yans (hereditary land owners of minor estates). The second period falls over the 15<sup>th</sup> century when people started calling themselves the nobles (*nobilis*). This is the time when the available written sources yield the majority of known Podolian families of both local and foreign origins. The first magnates emerged in Podolia – the possessors of Buchach, the Kirdeys, and the Odrowąż of Sprowa. Right then they acquired the highest positions in the local hierarchy; they were the community out of which the King chose his governors, the mayors, and assigned them to serve as voivodes and castellans. They were accompanied by a strong middle class community that predominantly consisted of the nonnative nobles, who with the emergence of Podolian voivodship acquired the positions of district judges, chamberlains (estate delimitation officers – *podkomorzy*), district clerks (*pisarz ziemski*), deputy district judges (assistant judges – *podśędek*), etc. Finally, the third category was a large group of nobles who were privileged to own some lands at the tumultuous frontier. We learn more about them in the next 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The third period was the longest and also the most complicated in terms of putting the social structure of the Podolian nobility in order. From the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century the local nobility began to form several groups based on the following characteristics: 1) wealth; 2) belonging to a governing stratum; 3) belonging to this or that clientele circle; 4) family connections. These characteristics became the decisive factors in the founding of the local nobility corporation by the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. With regard to certain proportions, from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the number of settled petty nobles serving at the borders considerably

increased. The size and wealth of this stratum were captured in the voivode-ships revisions of the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, when, for instance, the village of Popivtsi ascribed to the Bar castle was inhabited by 70 nobles of Popovsky name who owned 70 horses and only three peasants and five farmers.

The proposed classification does not account for the ethnicity. The described groups were formed from both local (not necessarily of Slavic origin) and nonnative nobles. Their names, patronyms, and surnames lead to more questions than answers, because the available sources are written in different languages – Ruthenian, Latin, and Polish to name a few. It is not easy to determine who exactly was meant when mentioned as Ivanko, Ioan, or Jan in each case. Moreover, the emergence of the first registries of coats of arms, and specifically that of Bartosz Paprocki that presented the legends of families' origins, complicates the task of tracing the roots of Podolian nobility. For example, the heraldic tradition gave a Croatian origin to the family of Yarmolynsky and created a legendary story of the first representative of this family Khodko who after "having arrived" from Croatia in 1407 received the village of Yarmolinty from Władysław II Jagiełło for hereditary ownership. Is Khodko a Croatian name? The family of Volodyiovsky (Polish: Wołodyjowski) created a story of Moscow roots of their ancestry pointing out the place from which in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century their ancestor presumably "came" to the Polish Crown. It is worth noting that both of the families mentioned above used the coat of arms of Korchak. Therefore, the search for ethnic origins is usually very complicated and limited by the lack of information necessary to make some conclusions.

Another aspect of researching the Podolian nobility is defining their religious affiliation. There are several possibilities: Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Muslims, and probably Protestants (starting from the 50s-60s of the 16<sup>th</sup> century). The history of any confession on the territory of Podolia up to the 17<sup>th</sup> century is too short of sources and therefore less known to the scholars. Only the Catholic Church, thanks to proper documenting and protection of the supreme rulers and magnates of the Polish Crown, is better researched. However, this does not mean that the Catholic population was a majority. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Leon Białkowski made an attempt to classify all the known to him representatives of nobility corporation based on the ethnic criteria and segregated 'the Ruthenians' from 'the Poles' with the proportion of approximately one to three. Such outcome of his classification is quite superficial, for to a great extent it is based on the onomastic analysis of names and surnames. It is well known that a name, and, moreover, a surname or a nickname does not say much about a noble's religious affiliation. Instead, each case is peculiar and unique.

The Orthodox Church considerably prevailed over the Catholic by the number of parishes. According to the taxes withdrawn in Podolian voivodeship in the 60s of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, almost each of bigger Podolian villages had its own church. The number of Catholic parishes outside the city of Kamianets was limited to the towns that used to be the centers of old castle counties (povit) such as Chervonohrod, Skala, Husiatyn, Smotrych, Zinkiv, Letychiv, and Bar. Thus, one can safely talk about the prevalence of the Catholic Church only in relation to the nonnative nobility who came from the very Polish lands and slowly gained the new parishioners through the mixed marriages. These hypotheses are as circumspective as eloquent the sources of that time are.

As for the Protestant members of the Podolian nobility, up to the 70s of the 16<sup>th</sup> century they largely found parishioners among the nobles-in-service. The family of the Potocki might serve as an example. In the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Podolia General Mayor Mikołaj Potocki (died in 1571) was a Calvinist.

The next important ethnic factor in Podolian history is the presence of Wallachs – the natives of Moldovan and Wallachian principalities. A certain number of the Podolian nobility was of Wallachian origin that was linked to the neighboring position of the principalities and a vassal dependence of Moldovan principality with regard to the Polish Crown, and a political instability in these principalities that made Podolia the destination for the refugees. To the Podolian nobility, the Moldovan affairs were one of the most significant external issues and could be equaled to the Tatar affairs. In spite of the numerous contacts lasting from the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century when Yuriy, one of the Koriatovychs, was invited to be the prince of Moldovan principality, the relations of the two ethnic groups, unfortunately, are scarcely represented in historiography. To a greater extent, Podolia became a home to the political exiles from Moldova.

The land was one of the significant factors in the formation of local nobility corporation. It was a regular object of struggle. Assignations, for hereditary and lifelong ownership, were common in the beginning. The documenting of the property rights was in process. When the land resource became scarce, the executionists started to control the assignations. The decline of the *mass levy* (French: *levée en masse*; Polish: *pospolite ruszenie*) at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in fact, forced the nobility to pursue military careers in the units of border surveillance.

Almost all the rule of Sigismund I the Old and Sigismund II Augustus passed in continuing struggle for lands and the implementation of the provisions of the executional movement. The outcome of this was the 1564–1565 revision of the ownership letters related to the rights to estates along with the first lustration of

the Crown estate (*korolivschna*) in 1564. At the same time the Treasury of the Polish Crown conducted a revision of all hereditary estates in 1563 and 1565. These documented processes present an opportunity to analyze the membership of the Podolian land owning nobility of that time.

The execution of the land ownership in the 60s of the 16<sup>th</sup> century provoked the emergence of local regionalism and the display of corporate objections on the part of Ruthenian nobles at the Warsaw Sejm of 1565. When the need to present the arguments in support of the ownership was risen, the Podolian nobility not only knew about their estates, but also identified their locations. Quite a modest territory of Podolian principality, which at the time consisted of one district court county, acquired a lot of different land parts and a number of old castle counties, about which the nobles learned once again from the texts of their land privileges. At the Sejm of 1565 the Podolian nobles won specific rights related to their otherness and particularity and made the rest of the delegates to consider those privileges.

The participation in the executorial movement shaped the Podolian nobles into a separate regional community. In the 60s of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the nobility corporation of Podolian voivodeship decisively asserted itself as a quite independent political, military, and economic player equal to its peers from the Polish Crown. Despite the quietness and weakness of their voices, in their political strategies the Podolian nobles always looked up to a powerful patron or acted together with the more numerous and more politically mature nobles from the Ruthenian voivodeship. Thus, their ability to find compromises and be flexible, as such strategies ensured the existence of both an ordinary noble and the whole nobility corporation, and their political elasticity distinguished the Podolian nobility among the similar communities in East-Central Europe of that time.