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THE FORMATION OF THE UKRAINIAN NATION: THE LITHUANIAN-POLISH PERIOD AND ITS LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract. This study is devoted to a comprehensive analysis of the role of the Lithuanian-Polish period as a key stage in the genesis of the Ukrainian nation. The work examines the historical preconditions for the integration of Ukrainian lands into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and analyses the impact of political transformations on the ethnic consolidation of society. Particular attention is paid to the legal aspects of nation-building. The author examines the Statutes of Lithuania as the foundation of legal regulation and the role of Magdeburg law in the development of urban self-government. The consequences of the Unions of Lublin (1569) and Brest (1596) are highlighted, which brought about profound changes in the socio-legal structure and religious life, and led to processes of Polonisation. The study employs historical-legal and comparative methods, which have made it possible to determine the legal status of various social classes (nobility, townspeople, peasants) and its influence on the formation of national identity. The findings of this study emphasise that it was during this period that the foundations of Ukrainian legal culture were laid and the institutional prerequisites for future statehood were formed. It is argued that the legal transformations of the Lithuanian-Polish period became a factor in socio-cultural differentiation and a catalyst for the national self-determination of Ukrainians.

Key words: nation-building, Lithuanian-Polish period, Lithuanian Statutes, Magdeburg Law, Union of Lublin, Union of Brest, legal culture, national identity.

Introduction. The relevance of researching the formation of the Ukrainian nation during the period when Ukrainian lands were part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth stems from the need for a comprehensive re-examination of the historical and legal processes that had a decisive influence on the development of national identity. It was during this period that profound transformations took place in the political organisation, legal system and social structure of society, laying the foundations for the further development of the Ukrainian nation.

The Lithuanian-Polish period is characterised by the combination of two distinct legal and political traditions – the Lithuanian tradition, based on the principles of preserving local customs and autonomy, and the Polish tradition, which gradually introduced elements of centralised administration and noble democracy. This interaction created unique conditions for the development of the legal culture of the Ukrainian population and the formation of specific features of its national identity.

Particular attention in academic research is paid to the role of legal acts, in particular the Statutes of Lithuania, which became one of the most developed codified legal systems of their time. They not only regulated social relations but also contributed to the preservation of elements of local legal tradition, which was of great importance for the ethnic consolidation of the population of the Ukrainian lands.

Equally significant is the impact of the Union of Lublin of 1569, which led to the incorporation of most Ukrainian territories into the Kingdom of Poland. This brought about substantial changes in the legal system, administrative structure and social relations, which, in turn, influenced the processes of national identity formation.

The relevance of the topic is also determined by contemporary state-building processes in Ukraine, which require a thorough historical and legal analysis of earlier stages of development. Research into the Lithuanian-Polish period allows us to identify the origins of modern legal institutions and understand the historical preconditions for the formation of Ukrainian statehood.

Furthermore, there is growing interest in contemporary scholarship in the issues of nation-building within the context of the interaction between different legal systems and cultural traditions. The Lithuanian-Polish period is a prime example of such interaction, as it was during this time that Eastern Slavic and Western European legal models converged.

Research into this historical period is important not only for reconstructing the past, but also for understanding contemporary processes in the formation of the Ukrainian nation, which accounts for its academic and practical significance.

Main text. The aim of this study is to provide a comprehensive historical and legal analysis of the processes involved in the formation of the Ukrainian nation during the Lithuanian-Polish period, with a focus on the legal, social and cultural transformations that took place in the Ukrainian lands during the 14th–16th centuries. Particular attention is paid to determining the role of legal institutions, in particular the Statutes of Lithuania, Magdeburg law and the Polish legal system, in the formation of the national identity of the Ukrainian population.

Achieving this objective involves addressing a series of interrelated research tasks that will reveal the multidimensional nature of the process under study and its historical and legal character.

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To analyse the historical preconditions for the formation of the Ukrainian nation whilst Ukrainian lands were part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.
2. To examine the specific features of the functioning of the legal system of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and its influence on the development of the legal culture of the Ukrainian population.
3. To identify the role of Polish law and the policy of Polonisation in the transformation of socio-legal relations in the Ukrainian lands.
4. To analyse the socio-legal structure of society and the characteristics of the legal status of various social classes.
5. To assess the influence of religious factors, in particular the Union of Brest, on the formation of legal and national identity.
6. To identify the long-term legal consequences of the Lithuanian-Polish period for the further development of Ukrainian statehood.
7. To summarise the role of legal institutions in the process of forming the Ukrainian nation as a historical-cultural and political-legal phenomenon.

The stated aim and objectives enable a systematic approach to the analysis of nation-building processes and the identification of key legal determinants that influenced the formation of the Ukrainian nation during the historical period under study.

The study of the formation of the Ukrainian nation during the Lithuanian-Polish period is based on a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach that combines historical-legal, socio-cultural, political-institutional and source-based analysis. Such an approach is necessary given the complexity and multidimensional nature of the processes that took place in the Ukrainian lands in the 14th–16th centuries, when legal systems, social structure and cultural-ethnic identities were simultaneously undergoing transformation.

The research material comprises a wide range of historical sources of various origins, which enable the reconstruction of the legal and social reality of the Lithuanian-Polish period.

Legislative acts. This group includes the Statutes of Lithuania (1529, 1566, 1588), acts of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, privileges granted by Polish kings, Sejm resolutions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as well as town charters regulating the activities of communities. These sources

allow for an analysis of the evolution of legal institutions and the degree of integration of Ukrainian lands into the state-wide legal system (Chaikovskiy et al., 2003).

Historical narrative sources. These include Rus' chronicles, Polish chronicles (in particular the chronicles of M. Strykowski), as well as Western European diplomatic and travel accounts. They reflect political events, social processes and relations between ethnic groups, which is important for understanding the context of nation-building (Hrushevsky, 1997).

Archival documents. These include court records, land charters, the records of town and district courts, municipal registers, and documents from ecclesiastical institutions. They enable us to examine the actual functioning of the legal system at the local level and the mechanisms of law enforcement (Yakovenko, 2006).

Academic literature. The study draws on the works of Ukrainian and foreign historians, legal scholars and sociologists who have researched issues of ethnogenesis, state-building and legal transformations in Eastern Europe. Particular attention is paid to contemporary concepts of nation-building and historical memory.

Supplementary sources. This group includes cartographic materials, reconstructions of historical territories, statistical summaries from later periods, as well as electronic academic databases that help clarify the historical and legal context.

The methodological basis of the study is founded on the principles of historicism, objectivity and systematicity, which allows the Lithuanian-Polish period to be considered as a coherent historical and legal phenomenon.

The historical-legal method is applied to analyse the evolution of legal institutions, their transformation and their influence on the formation of social relations. It allows us to trace how legal norms changed through the interaction of Lithuanian, Polish and Ruthenian traditions.

The comparative law method is used to compare different legal systems (Lithuanian, Polish and the local Ruthenian system). This makes it possible to identify common features, differences and the mechanisms of their interaction within a single political and legal space.

The systemic approach allows the legal system to be viewed as a set of interrelated elements – norms, institutions, procedures and social practices. This approach provides a holistic understanding of how society functions.

Source criticism is aimed at the critical study of historical documents, determining their authenticity, the context of their creation and their degree of reliability. This helps to avoid distortions in the reconstruction of historical processes.

The sociocultural method is used to analyse the influence of legal norms on the formation of cultural and national identity, particularly through education, religion, language and social practices.

The institutional approach allows for an examination of the role of state, judicial and religious institutions in shaping the legal order and their influence on processes of social integration.

The application of this combination of methods and sources provides a multi-level analysis of the Lithuanian-Polish period as a crucial stage in the formation of the Ukrainian nation. This makes it possible to reveal not only the formal legal aspects, but also the underlying socio-cultural processes that shaped the development of Ukrainian society.

The state of academic research into the formation of the Ukrainian nation during the Lithuanian-Polish period is characterised by considerable depth and a wide variety of approaches that have emerged in both domestic and foreign historiography. Research into this period is a complex task, as it encompasses the political, legal, social and cultural transformations that took place amidst the integration of Ukrainian lands into various state formations. In contemporary scholarship, this issue is examined through the lens of an interdisciplinary approach, which allows for a comprehensive assessment of the influence of legal institutions on the formation of national identity.

Among Ukrainian researchers, Mykhailo Hrushevsky, Ivan Krypiakievych, Nataliia Yakovenko and Yaroslav Dashkevych have made significant contributions to the study of this issue. In the works of these scholars, particular attention is paid to the historical continuity of the development of Ukrainian lands, the role of legal institutions and the specific nature of socio-political processes during the Lithuanian-Polish period. In particular, it is emphasised that this stage was not an interruption in the development of the Ukrainian statehood tradition, but, on the contrary, became an important period of adaptation and transformation of previous forms of statehood.

Mykhailo Hrushevsky (1955), in his seminal conception of the history of Ukraine-Rus', put forward the idea of the continuity of the Ukrainian people's development, emphasising the role of the Lithuanian state in preserving Rus' legal traditions. Ivan Krypiakievych (Krypiakievych, 1990) viewed this period as a stage in the formation of the social structure of Ukrainian society, emphasising the significance of the legal status of various estates. Natalia Yakovenko (Yakovenko, 2006) devotes considerable attention in her research to cultural and legal aspects, in particular the influence of noble culture and legal norms on the formation of identity. Yaroslav Dashkevych (Dashkevych, 2007) analyses the geopolitical factors in the development of Ukrainian lands.

Contemporary Ukrainian scholars view the Lithuanian-Polish period as a complex and contradictory phase in which processes of integration and differentiation coexisted. On the one hand, local legal traditions and cultural identity were preserved, whilst on the other, the influence of the Polish legal and social model grew stronger. This dualism created the conditions for the formation of new forms of identity that combined elements of different cultural and legal systems.

In foreign historiography, the issue of the formation of the Ukrainian nation during the Lithuanian-Polish period is examined within the broader context of the history of Central and Eastern Europe. Alexander Subtelny, Serhii Plokyh, Paul Robert Magocsi, Timothy Snyder and Norman Davies have made significant contributions to research on this topic. Their works analyse the processes of state-building, legal transformations and cultural changes that took place in Eastern Europe, particularly in the Ukrainian lands.

Oleksandr Subtelny (Subtelny, 2009) emphasises the significance of the Lithuanian-Polish period as a stage in the integration of the Ukrainian lands into the European political and cultural sphere. Serhii Plokyh (Plokyh, 2015) focuses on the processes of identity formation in the context of interaction between different ethnic and religious groups. Paul Robert Magocsi (Magocsi, 2010) regards this period as pivotal for the formation of regional diversity within Ukrainian society. Timothy Snyder (Snyder, 2003) analyses the influence of political structures on the formation of national consciousness, whilst Norman Davies (Davies, 1981) explores the role of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a multinational state that created unique conditions for the development of various peoples.

A separate area of research comprises works devoted to the analysis of legal systems from the Lithuanian-Polish period. These studies focus in particular on the Lithuanian Statutes, Magdeburg law and Polish legislation as the primary sources of legal regulation. Researchers emphasise that it was precisely these legal institutions that played a key role in shaping the legal culture and social organisation of the Ukrainian population (Frost, 2015).

At the same time, there are differing approaches in the academic literature to assessing the impact of the Polish factor on the development of the Ukrainian nation. Some researchers highlight the negative consequences of Polonisation, as well as social and religious pressure, which led to increased social differentiation and conflicts. Others, however, emphasise the positive aspects, in particular integration into the European legal space, the development of urban self-government and the formation of new social institutions.

Thus, an analysis of the state of academic research on this issue demonstrates its complexity, multidimensionality and controversial nature. The diversity of approaches adopted by Ukrainian and foreign researchers allows for the formation of a comprehensive understanding of the Lithuanian-Polish

period as a crucial stage in the formation of the Ukrainian nation, one that requires further in-depth historical and legal analysis.

The legal transformations of the Lithuanian-Polish period played a decisive role in the formation of Ukrainian identity, as it was during this time that new forms of legal regulation were taking shape, influencing the social structure, cultural processes and political organisation of society. The integration of Ukrainian lands into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and later the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, facilitated the inclusion of the local population within a broader legal and institutional framework that combined elements of East Slavic and Western European traditions.

One of the key factors in the formation of legal identity was the preservation and development of Rus' law within the Lithuanian state. The Lithuanian Statutes, which codified the norms of customary law, ensured legal continuity and the stability of social relations (Yakovenko, 2006). They served not only as a regulatory instrument but also as a means of preserving the legal identity of the Ukrainian population, which was of great importance for fostering a sense of belonging to a specific legal community.

With the transfer of Ukrainian lands under the rule of the Kingdom of Poland, significant changes took place in the legal system. The spread of Polish legislation, in particular the norms of noble law, contributed to the formation of new social and legal hierarchies. During this period, local legal traditions were gradually supplanted and replaced by Polish norms, accompanied by processes of Polonisation and a shift in the socio-cultural identity of part of the population.

A key element of these legal transformations was the introduction of Magdeburg law, which facilitated the development of urban self-government. It created the conditions for the emergence of new social groups—the bourgeoisie—which played a significant role in the development of economic life and the spread of European legal standards (Bilous, 2008). It was within the urban environment that elements of civic identity took shape, combining legal, economic and cultural aspects.

The religious factor, which was closely intertwined with legal processes, played a distinct role in the formation of identity. The Union of Brest in 1596 led to a change in the legal status of the Orthodox Church and the creation of a new confessional structure, which influenced social relations and the self-identification of the population (Plokyh, 2001). Confessional differences became an important element of social differentiation and, at the same time, a factor in the consolidation of certain population groups.

Processes of socio-legal stratification also had a significant influence on the formation of Ukrainian identity. The serfdom of the peasantry, the growing role of the nobility, and the restriction of the rights of other social groups contributed to the formation of a specific social structure that determined the nature of social relations. In these circumstances, legal norms served not only as a tool for regulation but also for social control, which influenced the formation of collective consciousness.

At the same time, it is worth noting that these legal transformations were not merely restrictive in nature, but also served to modernise the legal system. Integration into the European legal sphere contributed to the spread of new legal ideas, the development of institutions of self-government, and the formation of a legal culture. This laid the groundwork for the further development of the Ukrainian nation as part of European civilisation.

The legal transformations of the Lithuanian-Polish period became one of the key factors in the formation of Ukrainian identity. They determined the main directions of development of legal culture, social structure and the political organisation of society, which subsequently influenced the processes of nation-building and state-building in Ukraine.

The formation of the Ukrainian nation during the Lithuanian-Polish period has deep historical roots, dating back to the decline of Kievan Rus' and the subsequent political disintegration of the East Slavic lands. The Mongol invasion of the 13th century led to the destruction of a unified political centre and resulted in the formation of new centres of power, which paved the way for the incorpo-

ration of Ukrainian territories into neighbouring states, in particular the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Subtelny, 2009).

The incorporation of Ukrainian lands into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 14th century took place in a relatively peaceful manner and was accompanied by the preservation of a significant portion of local political and legal traditions. The Lithuanian authorities, guided by the principle of 'do not disrupt the old, do not introduce the new', ensured the autonomy of the Ruthenian lands, which contributed to the preservation of their cultural and legal identity. This created favourable conditions for the gradual development of the ethnic unity of the Ukrainian population (Yakovenko, 2006).

The political integration of the Ukrainian lands into the Lithuanian state was accompanied by the formation of a new administrative system, which combined local traditions of governance with elements of centralised authority. The Rus' language was used as the language of official business, which contributed to the preservation of cultural unity and legal continuity. Such a policy ensured relative stability and fostered the development of social institutions.

Socio-economic changes also played an important role in creating the conditions for nation-building. The development of feudal relations, the growth of towns and the expansion of trade contributed to the formation of new social groups, notably the nobility and the bourgeoisie. These groups became the bearers of new legal and cultural values, which gradually transformed society.

Geopolitical factors had a significant influence on the formation of the Ukrainian community. Ukrainian lands found themselves at the crossroads of Eastern and Western influences, which determined their role as a contact zone between different civilisational models. Interaction with European states contributed to the spread of new political and legal ideas, whilst the preservation of their own traditions ensured the continuity of historical development (Huntington, 1996).

Following the conclusion of the Union of Krewo in 1385 and the subsequent rapprochement between Lithuania and Poland, a new phase in the development of the Ukrainian lands began. The strengthening of Polish influence gradually transformed the political and legal system, creating new challenges for the preservation of local identity. At the same time, these processes facilitated the integration of Ukrainian lands into the European political sphere (Plokhyy, 2016).

The historical preconditions for the formation of the Ukrainian nation during the Lithuanian-Polish period were determined by a combination of factors: political integration, socio-economic changes, and cultural and legal continuity. It was these factors that laid the foundation for the subsequent processes of nation-building, which unfolded amidst the complex interplay of various state and legal systems.

The legal system of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania became one of the key factors that shaped the development of the Ukrainian lands in the 14th–16th centuries and had a significant influence on the formation of the Ukrainian nation. Its defining feature was the combination of Old Russian legal traditions with new elements of state administration, which ensured relative stability in social relations and helped preserve the cultural and legal identity of the local population.

One of the most important sources of law during this period were the Lithuanian Statutes – codified collections of laws that systematised the norms of customary law, princely decrees and judicial practice. The adoption of three editions of the Statute (1529, 1566, 1588) testifies to the high level of development of legal thought and the desire to regulate social relations. A distinctive feature of these documents was that they were largely based on Ruthenian law and took local traditions into account, which ensured their acceptance by the population of the Ukrainian lands (Yakovenko, 2006).

An important aspect of the functioning of the legal system of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was the preservation of customary law as a key source for regulating social relations. It complemented written law and ensured the flexibility of the legal system, allowing for regional characteristics and social conditions to be taken into account. It was precisely this interaction between written and customary law that contributed to the formation of a specific legal culture, which combined traditional and new elements.

The judicial system also played an important role in the development of legal relations. Various types of courts operated in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania—princely, regional, town and district courts—which heard cases in accordance with their respective jurisdictions. This contributed to the development of legal practice and helped shape the population's understanding of legality and justice as the foundations of social order.

Particular attention should be paid to the legal status of different social groups. The nobility enjoyed significant privileges, which cemented its leading role in the political life of the state. At the same time, the rights of townspeople and peasants were more limited, which created social inequality and determined the nature of social relations. However, even under these conditions, the legal system ensured a certain level of regulation of interaction between the different estates (Plokhyy, 2016).

An important factor in the legal system's influence on the formation of Ukrainian identity was the use of the Rus' (Old Ukrainian) language in official correspondence and judicial proceedings. This contributed to the preservation of cultural heritage and the formation of a sense of community among the population of the Ukrainian lands. The language of law served not only as a means of communication but also as an element of cultural self-identification (Nimchuk, 2015).

Furthermore, the legal system of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania facilitated the integration of Ukrainian lands into the wider European legal sphere. It combined elements of Roman, canon and customary law, thereby laying the foundations for the development of legal institutions characteristic of Western Europe.

Thus, the legal system of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania played an important role in the formation of the Ukrainian nation, ensuring the preservation of legal traditions, the development of social institutions and integration into the European legal space. Its influence was evident in the formation of legal consciousness, social structure and cultural identity among the population of the Ukrainian lands.

Polish influence on the Ukrainian lands significantly increased following the conclusion of the Union of Lublin, which marked a turning point in the development of the region's legal and political systems. As a result of this union, a significant part of Ukrainian territories came under the direct rule of the Kingdom of Poland, leading to profound changes in the spheres of governance, law and the social structure of society (Yakovenko, 2006).

One of the key consequences was the gradual spread of Polish legislation and legal institutions. The Polish legal system was based on the principles of noble democracy, which provided extensive political rights for the nobility but at the same time restricted the participation of other social groups in state administration. This led to a change in the legal status of the local elite, who were forced to integrate into the Polish political system by adopting its norms and values.

An important aspect of the transformation was the gradual replacement of the norms of the Lithuanian Statutes by Polish law, although in practice this process was protracted and uneven. In many regions of the Ukrainian lands, traditional legal norms continued to apply, indicating a certain resilience of the local legal culture. However, the general trend was towards a strengthening of the influence of Polish legal institutions, which altered the structure of legal relations (Yakovenko, 2006).

A key factor in these changes was the policy of Polonisation, which encompassed not only the cultural but also the legal sphere. The adoption of the Polish language, the Catholic faith and the noble way of life became a prerequisite for maintaining social status and access to political rights. This contributed to the formation of a new identity among a section of the Ukrainian elite, which gradually integrated into Polish society (Plokhyy, 2016).

At the same time, social differentiation was deepening. The Polish legal system helped to consolidate the privileged position of the nobility and increase the dependence of the peasantry. The processes of serfdom became systematic, which significantly restricted the rights of peasants and determined their socio-economic dependence. This had long-term consequences for the development of Ukrainian society and the formation of its social structure.

Another important element of legal transformations was the spread of Magdeburg Law, which facilitated the development of urban self-government and contributed to the formation of new social groups (Markevysh, 2021). Towns were given the opportunity to resolve internal matters independently, which contributed to the development of the economy, trade and crafts. New legal practices and elements of civic culture took shape in the urban environment.

At the same time, Polish influence also had certain positive aspects. Integration into the legal system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth opened up access to European legal ideas and contributed to the development of education, culture and legal thought. This created the conditions for the formation of a more complex and multidimensional national identity that combined elements of various traditions.

Polish influence during the Lithuanian-Polish period was of a contradictory nature. On the one hand, it contributed to the transformation of the legal system, the integration of Ukrainian lands into the European sphere, and the development of new institutions. On the other hand, it led to increased social inequality, Polonisation, and the loss of some of the traditional legal autonomy. Taken together, these processes constituted an important stage in the formation of the Ukrainian nation and its legal culture.

The socio-legal status of the population of the Ukrainian lands during the Lithuanian-Polish period was characterised by a complex hierarchical structure, shaped by a combination of local traditions and imported Polish-Lithuanian legal norms. During this period, society was clearly divided into estates, each of which had a different scope of rights, duties and legal privileges, which determined the nature of social relations and influenced the processes of national identity formation.

The highest social status belonged to the *szlachta*, which gradually became the leading political class of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The nobility enjoyed extensive property, political and judicial privileges, including the right to participate in the Sejm, to elect the king and to enjoy personal immunity. This contributed to the formation of a corporate noble culture, which largely determined the political development of the state and influenced the legal system as a whole (Yakovenko, 2006).

The burghers occupied an intermediate position within the social structure. Their legal status was largely determined by Magdeburg law, which guaranteed municipal self-government, judicial autonomy and the regulation of economic activity. The burghers were an important economic element of society, contributing to the development of crafts, trade and urban culture. At the same time, their political rights remained limited compared to those of the nobility (Markevysh, 2021).

The peasantry constituted the largest social group, but was also the most legally restricted. During the period of the gradual intensification of feudal relations, the serfs were bound to the land, which significantly restricted their freedom of movement, property rights and participation in public life. This entrenchment of dependency had long-term consequences for the socio-economic development of the Ukrainian lands.

The legal system of the time entrenched inequality between social classes, yet at the same time ensured a certain level of legal regulation and stability. The Lithuanian Statutes and Polish legislation formed the regulatory framework that defined the rights and obligations of various population groups. This helped to organise social relations, although it also entrenched social stratification (Yakovenko, 2006).

An important element of the socio-legal system was the system of obligations, which regulated economic and labour relations between the various social classes. The peasantry performed numerous obligations for the benefit of the landowners, whilst the nobility enjoyed significant economic privileges. This system ensured the functioning of the feudal economy, but at the same time restricted social mobility.

The Church played a special role in the socio-legal structure, possessing its own jurisdiction and exerting significant influence on social relations. Religious institutions served not only as spiritual centres but also as important legal entities that regulated part of social relations and influenced the formation of moral and legal norms (Matseliukh, 2018).

The socio-legal status of the population of the Ukrainian lands during the Lithuanian-Polish period was characterised by a complex system of class division, legal inequality and the gradual transformation of social relations. These processes were of great significance for the formation of the Ukrainian nation, as they determined the structure of society, the nature of legal relations and the development of social consciousness.

During the Lithuanian-Polish period, the religious factor played a key role in the transformation of socio-legal relations and the formation of Ukrainian identity. The conditions of religious pluralism that developed in the Ukrainian lands were the result of the interaction between the Orthodox tradition of Kievan Rus' and the Catholic influence of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which gradually intensified following the region's political integration into the Polish-Lithuanian state.

For a long time, the Orthodox Church remained an important bearer of cultural and legal heritage, ensuring the preservation of traditional norms of social life. It performed not only a spiritual function but also acted as an institution regulating part of social relations, shaping the moral and legal standards of the population's behaviour. In this context, the Church acted as a factor in the preservation of ethnic and cultural identity.

Following the conclusion of the Union of Brest, the confessional situation became significantly more complex, which had direct legal consequences. The establishment of the Greek Catholic Church led to a split within the Orthodox community and the formation of a new ecclesiastical-legal structure, which was subordinate to the See of Rome but retained the Eastern rite. This gave rise to conflicts regarding jurisdiction, property and church administration (Matseliukh, 2018).

The Catholic Church, supported by the Polish authorities, gradually expanded its influence across Ukrainian lands. It was granted privileges in the spheres of education, land ownership and political representation, which intensified processes of religious and social differentiation. This, in turn, affected the legal status of various religious groups and created unequal conditions for their development (Plokhyy, 2016).

Religious changes had a direct impact on the legal system, as religious affiliation determined access to certain rights and privileges. The Orthodox population often found itself in a less favourable legal position compared to Catholics, which intensified social tensions and contributed to the formation of protest movements. Thus, the religious factor became an important element of the legal stratification of society.

At the same time, religious life contributed to the preservation of cultural heritage and the development of education. Monasteries and brotherhoods served as centres of scholarship, education and legal thought, preserving the traditions of Kievan Rus' culture. They played an important role in shaping collective memory and national consciousness, which had a long-term impact on nation-building processes.

From a legal perspective, religious institutions had their own system of jurisdiction, which governed matrimonial and family relations, moral norms and certain property disputes. This gave rise to parallel legal systems that interacted with one another and formed a complex structure of legal regulation within society (Yakovenko, 2006).

The religious factor during the Lithuanian-Polish period had a multifaceted influence on the formation of the Ukrainian nation. It not only shaped the spiritual life of society but also directly influenced the legal system, social structure and processes of cultural identification among the population of the Ukrainian lands.

The results of the study indicate that the legal systems of the Lithuanian-Polish period had a decisive influence on the formation of the Ukrainian nation as a complex historical-legal and socio-cultural phenomenon. First and foremost, it should be noted that it was precisely during the period when the Ukrainian lands were part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that a fusion of three legal traditions—Rus', Lithuanian and Polish—took place, creating a unique legal model for the region.

An analysis of the sources suggests that the Statutes of Lithuania served as a key instrument in preserving the legal continuity of the Old Russian tradition. They not only codified existing norms but also adapted them to new political conditions, thereby ensuring the stability of the legal order. This contributed to the development of a sense of legal continuity among the population of the Ukrainian lands.

At the same time, the gradual strengthening of Polish influence following the Union of Lublin led to the transformation of the legal system towards unification and centralisation. Polish law, centred on the privileges of the nobility, altered the balance of social relations, strengthening the role of the nobility and restricting the rights of other estates. This created new socio-legal conflicts that influenced the development of public consciousness.

A particularly important finding is that the legal system performed not only a regulatory but also an identificatory function. The use of the Rus' language in official correspondence, the preservation of local legal norms and the functioning of traditional judicial institutions contributed to the formation of a specific legal culture, which became one of the elements of Ukrainian national identity (Nimchuk, 2015).

The study also shows that the development of Magdeburg law in the urban centres of the Ukrainian lands contributed to the formation of elements of civil society. Towns became hubs of legal autonomy, economic activity and cultural development, which had a positive impact on the processes of social modernisation.

It should be emphasised separately that the religious factor, combined with legal changes, had a significant influence on the formation of identity. Confessional transformations, particularly following the Union of Brest, led to the emergence of new legal regimes for various religious groups, which intensified social differentiation but at the same time contributed to the consolidation of the Orthodox population.

The findings suggest that the legal systems of the Lithuanian-Polish period were not only an instrument of governance but also a key factor in the formation of the Ukrainian nation. They shaped the social structure, regulated relations between social classes, and influenced the processes of cultural identification among the population.

Further analysis shows that the formation of the Ukrainian nation during the Lithuanian-Polish period took place not only under the influence of legal institutions, but also in close connection with socio-economic and cultural transformations. These processes interacted with one another, creating a complex system of factors that shaped the development of Ukrainian society and its identity.

One of the key findings is that the development of feudal relations and the gradual enslavement of the peasantry significantly altered the social structure of society. The growing economic dependence of peasants on landowners led to increased social stratification, which, in turn, influenced the formation of different levels of social consciousness and collective identity.

At the same time, the development of urban centres contributed to the formation of new social groups, in particular the bourgeoisie, which played an important role in the dissemination of legal and cultural innovations. Towns became centres of trade, crafts and education, which contributed to the formation of a more dynamic social environment and the development of elements of early civic culture.

The cultural transformations of this period were also of significant importance to the processes of nation-building. The spread of literacy, the development of education within church and municipal institutions, and the operation of brotherhood schools contributed to the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage. This helped maintain links between different social groups and foster a shared cultural space (Yakovenko, 2006).

Particular attention should be paid to the influence of religious institutions on socio-economic processes. The Church acted not only as a spiritual centre, but also as a significant landowner and participant in economic relations. This ensured its influence on the social structure of society and allowed it to shape moral, ethical and legal norms of behaviour (Matseliukh, 2018).

An important finding of the study is the establishment that cultural interaction between the Ukrainian, Polish and Lithuanian populations was of a dual nature. On the one hand, there was integration into the wider European cultural space; on the other, processes of preserving local identity and traditions were strengthened.

The socio-economic and cultural transformations of the Lithuanian-Polish period served as an important complement to legal processes and, together with them, formed the multidimensional foundation of the Ukrainian nation. They influenced the structure of society, the value system and the mechanisms of self-identification among the population.

The final stage of the analysis establishes that the Lithuanian-Polish period had long-lasting legal consequences, which largely determined the further development of Ukrainian statehood and national identity. First and foremost, it should be noted that the legal tradition formed during this period became the basis for subsequent institutional transformations in the Ukrainian lands.

One of the key findings is the identification of legal continuity between the provisions of the Lithuanian Statutes and the subsequent legal systems that operated on the territory of Ukraine. Despite changes in political regimes, many legal principles, particularly in the areas of the administration of justice, land relations and local self-government, remained relevant and influenced the formation of legal culture (Yakovenko, 2006).

An important long-term consequence was the consolidation of the estate-based principle of social organisation, which shaped the social structure for centuries to come. Whilst this system provided a degree of stability, it simultaneously restricted social mobility and fostered specific patterns of social behaviour that influenced the development of public consciousness.

The impact of legal transformations on the development of local self-government deserves special mention. Magdeburg Law, which was actively applied in towns, became a key element in the formation of traditions of autonomous governance that persisted into subsequent historical periods. This contributed to the development of elements of legal self-awareness and civic culture (Markevych, 2021).

Religious and legal changes also had a long-term impact on the formation of Ukrainian identity. The confessional division, which intensified after the Union of Brest, laid the foundations for the enduring existence of various models of cultural and legal self-identification, which persisted into subsequent centuries.

Overall, the findings of the study confirm that the Lithuanian-Polish period was not only a phase of political integration of the Ukrainian lands, but also a pivotal period in the formation of the legal and socio-cultural foundations of the Ukrainian nation. It was during this time that the structural elements were established which shaped the development of Ukrainian society in subsequent historical eras.

The long-term legal consequences of this period manifested themselves in the formation of legal traditions, social institutions and cultural models that became an integral part of the historical development of the Ukrainian nation.

Conclusions. This study allows us to draw general conclusions regarding the role of the Lithuanian-Polish period in the formation of the Ukrainian nation and its legal foundations. An analysis of historical-legal, socio-economic and cultural processes demonstrates that this period was one of the key stages in the formation of Ukrainian identity and the development of the institutional foundations of society.

Firstly, it has been established that the integration of Ukrainian lands into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania ensured the preservation of a significant part of Old Russian legal traditions. The Lithuanian Statutes served as an important instrument for the codification of law and contributed to legal stability, which had a positive impact on the development of social relations.

Secondly, it has been demonstrated that following the Union of Lublin, significant transformations took place in the legal system under the influence of Polish law, leading to changes in the social structure and the strengthening of class relations. This contributed to the formation of new models of political and social organisation within society.

Thirdly, it has been established that socio-economic processes—in particular, urban development, the serfdom of the peasantry and the emergence of the nobility system—had a significant impact on the formation of the social hierarchy and the collective consciousness of the population in the Ukrainian lands.

Fourthly, it has been established that the religious factor, particularly following the Union of Brest, became an important element of social differentiation and, at the same time, an instrument for preserving cultural identity, which influenced long-term nation-building processes.

Fifthly, it has been demonstrated that the legal institutions of the Lithuanian-Polish period had a long-lasting influence on the formation of Ukrainian legal culture, in particular through the development of local self-government, the judicial system and legal traditions.

Thus, the Lithuanian-Polish period should be regarded as a fundamental stage in the formation of the Ukrainian nation, which determined the key legal, social and cultural parameters of its subsequent development.

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