

UDC 929.7:27-722.5(477.8)“15/17”
DOI 10.24919/2519-058X.36.339344

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Bibliographic Description of the Article: Smutok, I., & Tuchapets, V. (2025). Ennoblement of the Orthodox/Greek Catholic Clergy in Przemyśl Land (the 16th – 18th centuries): Legal Conflicts and Everyday Reality. *Skhidnoievropeyskyi Istorychnyi Visnyk [East European Historical Bulletin]*, 36, 24–33. doi: 10.24919/2519-058X.36.339344

**ENNOBLEMENT OF THE ORTHODOX / GREEK CATHOLIC CLERGY
IN PRZEMYŚL LAND (THE 16th – 18th CENTURIES):
LEGAL CONFLICTS AND EVERYDAY REALITY**

Abstract. *The purpose of the study is to do a comprehensive research on a separate aspect of inter-estate relations in the Old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in particular, the ennoblement of priestly families and the mechanisms by which they achieved social success. The research methodology is based on the principles of historicism, scientificity, verification, as well as on the use of general scientific (analysis, synthesis, generalization) and special historical (prosopographic, historical and typological, historical and systemic) methods. Scientific Novelty.* The study focuses on a previously unknown aspect of inter-estate relations in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in particular the entry of the Orthodox and later Greek-Catholic clergy into the nobility (szlachta in Polish). The scope and mechanisms of this phenomenon have been elucidated through the prism of the legal field and everyday practice. **Conclusions.** The noble class of the Old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, despite its apparent isolation, was constantly replenished with new families. Among them there were

descendants of the Orthodox (Greek-Catholic) clergy. This phenomenon is observed in the territory of modern Western Ukraine (the Ruthenian Voivodeship). Within the boundaries of Przemyśl land, four dozen priestly families managed to improve their social status. All known cases of clergy ennoblement took place in the area of compact residence of the Ruthenian (Ukrainian) nobility (szlachta). After all, ennoblement was achieved not by legal instruments, but by close coexistence and kinship between the nobility and the local clergy. The life circumstances in which this latent ennoblement was carried out were different. However, certain trends and mechanisms of this process were common. Priests and their descendants, living in villages where the nobility lived compactly, acquired land ownership, became related to local families. Some of them changed their surnames to noble ones. Individual families lived in royal estates. They also achieved ennoblement through kinship with the nobility. However, the memory of their unprivileged origin persisted and their noble status was permanently questioned by the local noble community.

Keywords: nobility (szlachta) in Przemyśl land, Orthodox clergy, Greek Catholic clergy, Przemyśl diocese.

НОБІЛІТАЦІЯ ПРАВОСЛАВНОГО / ГРЕКОКАТОЛИЦЬКОГО ДУХОВЕНСТВА У ПЕРЕМИШЛЬСЬКІЙ ЗЕМЛІ (XVI – XVIII СТ.): ПРАВОВІ КОЛІЗІЇ ТА ПОВСЯКДЕННА РЕАЛЬНІСТЬ

Анотація. Мета дослідження – з'ясувати окремий аспект міжстанових стосунків Давньої Речі Посполитої, зокрема, нобілітацію священицьких родин та механізми досягнення ними суспільного успіху. **Методологія дослідження** базується на принципах історизму, науковості, верифікації, а також на використанні загальнонаукових (аналіз, синтез, узагальнення) та спеціально-історичних (просопографічних, історико-типологічних, історико-системних) методів. **Наукова новизна:** досліджено невідомий раніше аспект міжстанових стосунків Давньої Речі Посполитої, зокрема потрапляння православного, а згодом греко-католицького духовенства до шляхетського стану. Розкрито масштаби і механізми цього явища через призму правового поля та повсякденної практики. **Висновки.** Шляхетський стан Давньої Речі Посполитої попри позірну замкнутість постійно поповнювався новими родинами. 3-поміж них були вихідці з православного (греко-католицького) духовенства. Це явище спостерігається на теренах сучасної Західної України (Руське воєводство). У межах Перемишльської землі свій суспільний статус зуміли поліпшити чотири десятки священицьких родин. Усі відомі випадки нобілітації духовенства відбувалися в ареалі компактного проживання руської (української) шляхти. Адже шляхетство досягалося не правовими інструментами, а за тісного співіснування та родичання шляхти і місцевого духовенства. Життєві обставини, в яких здійснювалася ця латентна нобілітація, були різними. Однак певні тенденції і механізми цього процесу були спільними. Священники та їхні нащадки, проживаючи в селах, де компактно мешкала шляхта, набували землевласність, родичалися з місцевими родинами. Частина з них змінювали прізвища на шляхетські. Окремі родини проживали у королівських маєтностях. Вони також досягали нобілітації через родичання зі шляхтою. Втім пам'ять про їхнє непривілейоване походження зберігалася і постійно місцева шляхетська спільнота їхній шляхетський статус ставила під сумнів.

Ключові слова: шляхта Перемишльської землі, православне духовенство, греко-католицьке духовенство, Перемишльська єпархія.

Problem Statement. The Old Rzeczpospolita was an estate monarchy with a clearly dominant role of the upper class – the nobility (szlachta). Transition from one estate to another was seemingly impossible, because belonging to a certain social group was determined by origin, and not by personal qualities and desires of a person. However, everyday life made its own adjustments. Despite the fact that in the 16th – 18th centuries the family composition of szlachta did not undergo significant changes in its basis, it had never been stable and was replenished by people from the lower strata of society. In the Ruthenian Voivodeship (present-

day western Ukraine), this replenishment occurred, among other things, at the expense of the parish clergy of the Orthodox (later Greek Catholic) Church. This was due to the presence in Przemyśl land of a significant number of Ukrainian or rather Ruthenian nobility, who lived compactly in the southern part of the aforementioned land. A detailed study of this aspect reveals the mechanisms of ennobling underprivileged families that were not regulated in the legal field and demonstrates how inter-class barriers were overcome in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Review of Sources and Recent Research. The ennoblement of the Orthodox/Greek Catholic clergy in Przemyśl Land and the Ruthenian Voivodeship in the modern era was developed in the context of studying the history of the Orthodox/Greek Catholic Church and its hierarchy. The social origin of the clergy was the subject of research by both Polish and Ukrainian historians. In particular, we should mention the publications of O. Chupa, J. Krochmal and V. Zielecka-Mikołajczyk (Chupa, 2018; Krochmal, 2013; Krochmal, 2014; Zielecka-Mikołajczyk, 2021, pp. 501–506). Studying the history of Przemyśl Diocese and its clergy, they, among other things, the above mentioned researchers focused on the social origin of the parish clergy. However, they did not touch on the issue of the ennoblement of priestly families. Some factual information about priestly families can be found in the studies by O. Tsykvas, L. Tymoshenko (Tsykvas, 2016; Tymoshenko, 2006). These publications do not contain broader generalizing conclusions about the social origin of the clergy. The ennoblement of the clergy was studied by L. Smutok and Ya. Lyseyko during the period of Austrian rule in Galicia (the 19th century) (Smutok, & Lyseyko, 2023). A number of facts about the material conditions of the nobility and clergy are given in articles by I. Smutok, V. Ilnytskyi, M. Haliv (Smutok, Ilnytskyi, & Haliv, 2024;).

The purpose of the study is to do a comprehensive research on a separate aspect of inter-estate relations in the Old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in particular, the ennoblement of priestly families and the mechanisms by which they achieved social success.

Research Results. The Old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth remained an estate monarchy throughout its existence, where the nobility played a leading role in all spheres of life. In historiography, as early as the 19th century, there was a well-established idea of the nobility as a closed community that remained virtually unchanged in its tribal composition. These beliefs were based on legal conflicts. The practice of proving nobility in case of doubts about the belonging of certain individuals or families to the nobility (the so-called *deductio nobilitatis* procedure) shows what exactly served as a measure of belonging to nobility. Without delving into the law intricacies of that time, we may generally distinguish two basic criteria – origin and land ownership. The first one was based on the heredity of a social status: each nobleman/noblewoman was a son or daughter of a nobleman or noblewoman. It is not for anything that the procedure for proving nobility in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was largely based on finding out who the parents, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers, etc. of a person claiming noble status were. The second criterion involved the possession of a real estate that was in hereditary unlimited ownership. Ideally, the family estate of a nobleman could not be located in royal possessions or estates of the clergy (Vinnychenko, 2012, pp. 13–15).

Of course, everyday life made its own adjustments. In the 16th century there was a clear procedure for obtaining nobility by people of an unprivileged origin. Apparently, it was granted for outstanding merits, primarily in the military field. This procedure required the involvement of both monarch and Crown Sejm, and was therefore extremely complex. It

is not surprising that a limited number of individuals/families were ennobled in this way and their presence among the nobility did not affect the family composition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth nobility significantly (Vinnychenko, 2012; Smutok, 2018)

Despite these circumstances, the nobility class continued to be replenished in the 16th – 18th centuries by people from different strata of the population who overcame class barriers and circumvented legislative norms. We will try to demonstrate how this was done using the example of the clergy ennoblement of the Orthodox and later Uniate faith in the territories of Przemyśl land.

In the 16th – 18th centuries, the nobility of Przemyśl land was replenished with almost four dozen clans/families. These were both individual families represented by two or three generations, family branches uniting several dozen families within four or more generations, and entire clans with their own family branches. All of them were united by the fact that they lived in the territory that was the habitat of the Ruthenian nobility. This is the southeastern part of Przemyśl land from the Hungarian border in the south to the Dniester river and the Strviash river in the north. These families are equally present both in the noble settlements of the Ruthenian nobility and in the royal villages of Sambir economy, Drohobych and Przemyśl.

The ennoblements of each of these families/genus have partly distinct and partly common features. This circumstance enables us to unite them into several groups, each with its own history of social success.

Some priestly families entered the nobility estate at the stage of its final formation. Chronologically, this is the period of the end of the 15th – the first half of the 16th century.

Their ennoblement is directly related to the change in the status of land ownership. That is, they somehow managed to take the former church ownership into their own hands and transfer it to the status of noble land ownership.

In particular, the Berezhnyski were ennobled in this way. They did not receive their estates on the basis of a royal privilege with obligations to perform military service, like the majority of the noble families in the neighbourhood. Until the beginning of the 16th century, they are not mentioned at all in Przemyśl grodsky and zemstvo acts. The history of the family can be traced back to the 1530s, and the Berezhnyski were descended from Sambir archpriest and priest Ihnat. The family owned part of Berezhnysia village land, the rest of the village was in royal ownership. In the inventory of Sambir starostvo of 1585, the Berezhnyskis' property is described as "zemstvo's priesthood". Apparently, the Berezhnyski managed church lands. How they managed to alienate them in their own favour without resistance from the Orthodox bishop of Przemyśl is unknown. However, it is well known how the Berezhnyski transformed it into noble land ownership. Priest Ihnat, either himself or with the assistance of others, forged the Charter of Prince Leo, allegedly issued on May 4, 1292, to a priest Kos concerning the village of Berezhnysia. Of all the dozen or so Charters of Prince Leo, the one mentioned above is considered the most obvious forgery. However, this did not prevent its approval by King Sigismund II Augustus at the Sejm in 1550. Thus, from 1550 Ihnat and his sons became full owners of the noble estate (Smutok, 2019, pp. 166–212).

The Neronovychi Strashivski, the owners of the priesthood in Straszewychi (*Straszewicz in Polish*), a village owned by the Orthodox bishop of Przemyśl, tried to do something similar. However, they failed to alienate part of the lands, as the Berezhnyski had done. The Neronovychi also used a forgery, allegedly issued on behalf of Prince Leo. However, Przemyśl lords did not allow the loss of part of their landholdings. The Neronovychi continued to hold the priesthood in Straszewychi in the 16th and 17th centuries and were

priests in neighbouring villages. However, the lack of their own settlement with the status of a noble estate directly affected their social status. In the documents they are referred to partly as nobles, and partly as people of a non-noble origin (CSHAUL, f. 13, d. 1, c. 99, p. 940; c. 104, pp. 406, 408; c. 118, pp. 1695–1698; c. 128, ž. 1704; c. 129, pp. 113, 1409; c. 137, p. 1870; c. 140, p. 1940; c. 146, p. 1469; f. 14, d. 1, c. 13, p. 1060; c. 14, p. 662; c. 19, p. 10, c. 36, p. 65; c. 39, pp. 821, 854; c. 43, p. 1322; c. 47, p. 146; c. 59, pp. 792–793; c. 62, pp. 875, 927; c. 63, p. 193).

Another category of priestly families acquired nobility status by establishing a certain noble settlement. There were probably the majority of them. A typical example is the Stupnytski Vaskovychi. The ancestor of this branch was Vasko, who should probably be identified with Vasko, the governor and priest of the town church of Dobromyl. In 1650, he purchased a field called “Livkovska” from Ivan Stupnytskyi Saturnyk in Stupnytska Volia (CSHAUL, f. 13, d. 1, c. 125, pp. 139–140). Such a transaction was not accidental, because his wife was Anastasia, the daughter of the aforementioned Ivan. Probably, Vasko had a son, Mykhailo, and two daughters after marrying her. Mykhailo Vaskovych lived in Stupnytsia, or rather in Volia Stupnytska. In 1681 – 1713 he performed pastoral duties in the Church of St. George in Stupnytsia. It is noteworthy that in documents he is several times called “Dobromylsky”. If his father's status was indicated as “reverend / religious”, then Mykhailo is called “noble and religious” (1681, 1695, 1701, 1708) (CSHAUL, f. 13, d. 1, c. 136, pp. 491–494; c. 151, p. 548; c. 219, p. 697; c. 219, p. 697). Mykhailo married a noblewoman from the neighbouring village of Silets, Tetiana, a daughter of Ivan Yavorsky Masnykovych. The couple had five sons and three daughters. None of the sons continued the family tradition and became a priest. In documents from the first half of the 18th century, they are invariably called nobles and are related to the local nobility. Thus, Yacenty married Maria Horodyska Abramoych, Havrylo – Anna Vynnytska Klizevych, Hryhoriy – Sofia Monastyrska, Yuriy – Marianna Horodyska Yadvischak, Nastasiia married Joan Horodysky Matseichak, Olena – Havrylo Horodysky Bratko, and Marianna – Petro Baranetsky from the village of Kulchytsi. In 1782, the Stupnytski Vaskevychi confirmed their nobility without any obstacles (Smutok, 2014, pp. 94–95).

The Vysochanski Dumkovychi were ennobled in a similar way. They were descended from Stefan, a priest from the village of Vysotske Verkhnie. In 1671, he and his son Ivan transferred the manor with a subject pledged by the Vysochanski Minkovychi to Kyiv Metropolitan Anton Vynnytsky. By the middle of the 18th century, the Dumkovychi had already lived in the neighbouring noble settlement of Matkiv, where they owned some land. In the documents, they are called nobles. Finally, in 1782, the Dumkovychi confirmed their origin at Lviv zemstvo court (CSHAUL, f. 13, d. 1, c. 125, p. 2157; c. 264, pp. 205, 209; c. 616, pp. 1903–1904; f. 14, d. 1, c. 135, pp. 93–95).

The story of the Sozanski Luty family, the Ortynski Popovychi family from Ortynychi, the Matkivski Vanchovychi from Matkiv, and the Terletski Firlaby from Terlo is similar.

The fate of several other families was similar, but with certain differences. In particular, the Komarnytski Demkovychi owned the priesthood not in Komarnyky, but in the neighbouring village of Zadilsko. Their ancestor, a priest Demko, who lived somewhere at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, married one of the daughters of Staszek Komarnytsky Onofrykovych. His son Fedko continued to live in Zadilsko and inherited the parish from his father (1641). The third generation of the family is represented by a priest Petro. In the middle of the 18th century the Demkovychi family lived in Komarnyky, where they disposed of some land

ownership. In 1753 they sue at Przemyśl grodsky court with the Komarnytski Jadczyzsychi and are named the Komarnytski. In 1790, Demko's descendants confirmed their nobility as the Komarnytski Stashevychi family (CSHAUL, f. 13, d. 1, c. 146, p. 1483; c. 249, pp. 501, 506–507; c. 366, p. 324; c. 499, p. 1441; c. 532, p. 869; c. 587, p. 711; c. 592, p. 797; f. 165, d. 6a, c. 34, pp. 338–339).

Similarly, the Kulchytski Popovychi were descended from Protas, who in 1561 received a royal charter for the priesthood in the royal part of Kulchytsi. His grandson Ivan did not continue the family tradition and did not become a priest. After leaving the priesthood, he moved to the noble part of Kulchytsi. There he quickly formed a landed estate, buying up land from the Kulchytski. Initially, he was called either “polite” or “noble”. In 1611, Ivan was accused of a plebeian origin. Perhaps he himself inspired this in order to undergo the usual procedure of “purification of the nobility”, having previously prepared everything necessary for this. He succeeded in this, although the evidence presented (witnesses and written documents), upon closer examination, is inaccurate and doubtful. This fact confirms that the family did not belong to the Kulchytski. However, after 1611, Ivan and his descendants, known as the Kulchytski Popovychi, were firmly integrated into the local gentry environment (CSHAUL, f. 13, d. 1, c. 61, p. 1156; c. 68, p. 71; c. 87, pp. 782–784; c. 90, pp. 1407, 1430; c. 93, p. 963; c. 97, p. 1003; c. 99, p. 1046; c. 103, pp. 1311–1315; c. 107, p. 1065; c. 108, pp. 934, 938; c. 112, p. 131, 137; c. 121, pp. 1023, 1037; c. 124, p. 2785; c. 131, p. 327; c. 135, pp. 761, 1331; c. 142, p. 1554; c. 149, p. 2500; c. 309, p. 956; c. 316, p. 51; c. 319, p. 992; c. 325, p. 794; c. 327, p. 473; c. 336, pp. 847–849; c. 343, p. 114).

An interesting aspect of the ennoblement of priestly families is the use/change of surnames. All the above cases demonstrate that ennoblement was carried out by joining one of the already existing families, whose origin was not in doubt. As a result, this integration was accompanied by the “appropriation” of the noble surname of this family. This was obviously intended to serve as a certain guarantee against suspicions and accusations of a non-noble origin. We will consider how effective this was later. It can now be stated with certainty that the manipulation of surnames was not an accident, but a deliberate act, with the aim of hiding one's roots and origin.

However, not all priestly families resorted to this. Some of them continued to use their own surnames. For example, the Bilashivski, who were probably descended from a priest Ivan Bilas from Tatariv, moved to Vynnyky at the end of the 17th century, and continued to use their own surname and did not try to merge with the Vynnytski (Smutok, 2019, pp. 212–213). The Yamenski family from Terlo, moved, probably, from the royal village of Yamny. The documents from the 1670s and 1680s inform about a certain Mykhailo and Teodor Yamenski, parish priests in Terlo. The sons of the latter in the first half of the 18th century act as landowners in the villages of Terlo and Rozsokhy. They are invariably called noble and remain the Yamenski, not the Terletski (CSHAUL, f. 13, d. 1, c. 422, pp. 406, 531; c. 434, p. 321; c. 469, p. 1706; c. 478, p. 473; c. 485, p. 2044; c. 493, p. 1790; c. 507, p. 3248; c. 509, p. 776; c. 510, p. 1698; c. 516, p. 1411; c. 525, p. 1017; c. 529, p. 1860; c. 531, p. 2059; c. 532, pp. 325, 1263; c. 60, p. 1364; c. 561, p. 1856; c. 569, p. 235, 1027; c. 570, p. 2481). The history of the Smerechanski family, who came from the royal village of Smerechna in Przemyśl starostvo, is similar. Some Smerechanski families of a priestly origin lived in Terlo at the end of the 17th century, acquired land ownership there, and intermarried with the local nobility, but throughout the 18th century they were invariably called the Smerechanski (CSHAUL, f. 13, d. 1, c. 247, p. 591; c. 261, p. 336; c. 417, p. 2162; c. 422, p. 406; c. 433,

p. 2529; c. 473, p. 1930; c. 475, p. 2115; c. 517, p. 1081; c. 567, p. 1551; f. 14, d. 1, c. 146, p. 667; c. 223, p. 496; c. 231, p. 1012; c. 244, pp. 405–407)

The story of two other families is similar. Thus, the Sopotnytski descended from Theodore, a priest in Urizh (1677–1704), and his son Mykhailo, a priest in Yasenytsia Silna (1686–1715). The etymology of their surname probably indicates their origin from the settlement of Sopot near Pidhorodtsi (CSHAUL, f. 7, d. 1, c. 85, p. 199; f. 13, d. 1, c. 248, p. 555; c. 423, p. 156; c. 432, p. 825; c. 486, p. 695; c. 526, pp. 1284, 1538, 1541; c. 541, p. 588; c. 543, p. 186; c. 544, pp. 1555, 1790; c. 575, pp. 77, 92; c. 585, p. 385; c. 586, p. 1785; c. 596, pp. 2266–2267; c. 601, p. 1839; c. 620, pp. 2262, 2492; c. 628, pp. 393, 423; c. 629, p. 313; c. 651, p. 1320). The ancestor of the Shandrovski family was a priest from the village of Shandrovets in Sianochchyna region, Vasko. His descendants settled in Yanytychi near Drohobych in the 1620s and remained the Shandrovski among the local nobility in the 17th and 18th centuries (CSHAUL, f. 7, d. 1, c. 34, p. 378; f. 13, d. 1, c. 172, p. 364; c. 256, p. 102; c. 260, p. 602; c. 376, p. 759; c. 412, p. 289; c. 532, p. 1004; c. 556, p. 2003; c. 594, p. 2633; c. 598, p. 425; c. 625, p. 73; c. 627, p. 983; f. 14, d. 1, c. 79, p. 875; c. 180, p. 118; c. 182, p. 222; c. 186, pp. 295, 590; c. 188, p. 32; c. 195, p. 678; c. 221, p. 757; c. 299, p. 377).

In the context of the change of surnames, the history of the Topilnytski and Zhupanski families is interesting. Both lived in noble settlements. The village of Zhupanie was the joint property of the Matkivski, the Vysochanski and the Turianski, and the village of Topilnytsia, after the exchange of lands in the 1530s, was removed from the royal possessions of Sambir starostvo and passed into the hands of the Turianski. Local priestly families quickly integrated into the local nobility environment in the 16th century. However, neither the Zhupanski nor the Topilnytski families tried to become either the Matkivski or the Vysochanski or the Turianski families (CSHAUL, f. 7, d. 1, c. 89, p. 1058; f. 13, d. 1, c. 308, pp. 129, 130; f. 14, d. 1, c. 322, p. 1482)

Concluding the review of such a phenomenon as the change of surnames, one cannot help but mention the history of the Terletski Firlaby family, which is quite indicative. Their ancestor was probably Ilia Firlab, a priest in Nanchulivtsi Velyka, Sambir starostvo (early 17th century). His wife was Hasia Terletska Zankovych. From the middle of the 17th century, his descendants are mentioned among the landowners of Terlo. In the documents of the 18th century, they are called differently. They invariably called themselves the Terletski Zankovychi Firlaby, but in various legal proceedings their opponents call them the “Nanchulovski”, “Popovychi”, “Popovychi Firlaby”, “Nanchulovsky Firlaby” (CSHAUL, f. 13, d. 1, c. 478, p. 251; c. 484, pp. 1087, 1191; c. 486, pp. 1013, 1018; c. 494, p. 1192; c. 517, p. 1081; c. 532, p. 547; c. 535, pp. 71, 242; c. 545, pp. 383, 444, 2652; c. 546, p. 472; c. 551, p. 201; c. 561, p. 1895; c. 567, p. 1560; c. 568, p. 2222; c. 579, p. 2151; c. 618, p. 416; f. 14, d. 1, c. 180, p. 559; c. 187, pp. 257, 259; c. 229, p. 487).

In the 18th century, the ennoblement of priestly families took on new features. In particular, families appeared that tried in every way to emphasize their privileged position, but they did not live in any of the noble settlements. Usually these were priests and their descendants who owned priestly land in royal estates (Przemyśl and Drohobych starostvo, Sambir economy). Those were the Dobrivlianski from Dorozhiv and Medenychi, the Korostenski from Dobromyl, the Domozhyrski from Moldavske, the Tovarnytski from Ploske, and the Krasnytski from Hrushiv. As a rule, they were related to the local nobility, so in documents they are alternately called “reverends” and “nobles”. Apparently, the nobility in neighbourhood did not consider them to be their equals, but this did not prevent the latter

from receiving ennoblement after Galicia became part of the Austrian Empire (in detail: Smutok & Lyseyko, 2019; Smutok & Lyseyko, 2023).

All of these variations of ennoblement have one thing in common: they were achieved through the adaptation of public consciousness to the idea that a certain family belonged to the nobility. Obviously, this is due to the existing specifics of the Old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: there was no specific government body responsible for accounting for the nobility; there was no list or registry of noble families/individuals; there was no clear procedure and criteria that would regulate who had the right to become a noble and who did not. All this was based on historical memory and tradition. Residents of a certain region knew who was a nobleman and who was not among their neighbours. That is, the Kulchytski knew that their neighbours, the Chaikivski, the Berezhnyski, the Bachynski, the Sozanski, the Stupnytski, the Siletski families, etc., were noblemen. And each of these families, accordingly, knew each other well. Belonging to a certain family and owning land in one of the noble settlements were obvious criteria for nobility in the society of that time. Under these conditions, the ennoblement of the priesthood was achieved not through certain legal procedures, but through kinship with the nobility, the acquisition of a noble real estate, and often through a change of surname, as well as through the instillation in the public consciousness of the idea that a certain priestly family was noble from its grandfather or great-grandfather.

This latent appropriation of a noble status often met with resistance and was the subject of constant concern for priestly families. Despite the desire to erase their origins in every possible way, their noble neighbours remembered it for decades. Permanently, as a rule, during conflicts where one of the parties was the ennobled descendants of a priest, the opposing side emphasized in every possible way their questionable origin. In various protests and complaints their status was described as “honestus”, “plebeus”, etc. For example, in 1718, the Kopystynski from the village of Horodyshche, protesting against the sons of Mykhailo Stupnytsky, called them the Popovychi, not the Stupnytski, carefully avoiding calling them nobles (CSHAUL, f. 7, d. 1, c. 93, pp. 2331–2335). The Vysochanski Dumkovychi found themselves in a similar situation: in one of the protests it was noted that the Matkivski Viazulychi questioned their social status (CSHAUL, f. 13, d. 1, c. 616, p. 1903). The Terletski Firlaby invariably called themselves the Terletski Zankovychi, but in various legal proceedings their opponents called them “the Nanchulovski”, “the Popovychi”, “the Popovychi Firlaby”, “the Nanchulovsky Firlab” (CSHAUL, f. 13, d. 1, c. 486, p. 1013; c. 545, p. 383). All this proves that in everyday use, two identifications could coexist for a long time: self-identification, which used an assumed noble surname to hide one's priestly origin, and identification by neighbours and fellow residents of the noble settlement, who knew and remembered who was who.

During conflicts, it happened that the case was not limited to mockery and accusations of usurpation of the nobility. The opposing side demanded to prove a noble origin. In particular, the Topilnytski, the Terletski Firlaby, the Sozanski Luti, the Ortynski Popovychi, the Kulchytski Popovychi, the Korostenski, the Domozhyrski, the Smerechanski found themselves in such a situation. For this, it was necessary to present witnesses and present relevant documents. The case was considered at the Vyshensky Sejmik. If the procedure was successfully completed, a document was issued certifying the nobility status. This procedure was called “deduction of nobility” (*deductio nobilitatis*). There was preserved the nobility deduction of the Topilnytski (1580) (CSHAUL, f. 14, d. 1, c. 279, pp. 286–294); the

Domozhyrski (1604) (CSHAUL, f. 13, d. 1, c. 638, pp. 603–608); the Kulchytski Popovychi (1610) (CSHAUL, f. 14, d. 1, c. 89, pp. 291–294). The rest did not dare to prove their noble status, and without any reason. As these few conclusions testify, this matter was extremely difficult and was accompanied by outright falsifications.

For example, the Domozhyrski initially traced their origins to Terebovliansky sub-district chieftain Oleksandr Domozhyrsky, the owner of the village of Domazhyr in Lviv land (CSHAUL, f. 13, d. 1, c. 627, pp. 535–536). As proof of this, the privilege of King Sigismund III for Przemyśl Voivodeship, indicated by Olexander, was submitted to the city acts of Przemyśl (CSHAUL, f. 13, d. 1, c. 628, pp. 1001–1002). However, for some reason, the Domozhyrski abandoned this legend and chose a different path. In 1773, they presented a document called “*deductio nobilitatis*” by Petro Domozhyrsky, allegedly dated 1604. A closer examination of the document reveals its identity with the 1601 nobility deduction of Petro Ilnytsky. Only the characters were changed (instead of the Ilnytski – the Domozhyrski); the rest of the text is verbatim (CSHAUL, f. 13, d. 1, c. 638, pp. 603–608; c. 395, pp. 1102–1106).

Conclusions. The noble class of the Old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, despite its apparent isolation, was constantly replenished with new families. Among them there were descendants of the Orthodox (Greek-Catholic) clergy. This phenomenon is observed in the territory of modern Western Ukraine (the Ruthenian Voivodeship). Within the boundaries of Przemyśl land, four dozen priestly families managed to improve their social status. All known cases of clergy ennoblement took place in the area of compact residence of the Ruthenian (Ukrainian) nobility (szlachta). After all, ennoblement was achieved not by legal instruments, but by close coexistence and kinship between the nobility and the local clergy. The life circumstances in which this latent ennoblement was carried out were different. However, certain trends and mechanisms of this process were common. Priests and their descendants, living in villages where the nobility lived compactly, acquired land ownership, became related to local families. Some of them changed their surnames to noble ones. Individual families lived in royal estates. They also achieved ennoblement through kinship with the nobility. However, the memory of their unprivileged origin persisted and their noble status was permanently questioned by the local noble community.

Acknowledgement. We express sincere gratitude to all editorial board members for the consultations provided during the preparation of the article for printing.

Funding. The authors did not receive any financial assistance for the research and publication of this scientific work.

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*The article was received December 29, 2024.
Article recommended for publishing 30/08/2025.*