

Gender and Nation in Independent Ukraine

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Gender Studies and History

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Abstract of thesis entitled
Gender and Nation in Independent Ukraine

Submitted by LO Yi

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Abstract

This thesis examines the problems of gender relations and nation in post-Soviet Ukraine and aims to engender the Ukrainian nation building project. This project claims to be in the interest of all Ukrainian citizens, but is in fact profoundly gendered. Women and men have different gender roles, however it is typically men who are in control of the nation building project, and therefore of defining national gender norms. Central to male Ukrainian nation builders' conception of the "Ukrainian woman" is the ancient Slav pagan goddess Berehynia. Berehynia is represented as an ancient figure, the protectress of Ukrainian traditions and values since ancient times. Her image is used to promote the cult of the mother and child, the home and hearth, and thus to shape the desires and ambitions of contemporary Ukrainian women. The cult of Berehynia first became popular after the publication of *Berehynia* in 1987 by Ukrainian ethnographer Vasyl Skurativskyi. The Berehynia legend is legitimized by its antiquity and is promoted as a model for Ukrainian women to follow.

Typically, both gender and women's issues are absent from discussion about contemporary Ukrainian transitions. While Ukraine is actively engaged in the project of nation building and various large-scale transitions, women are assumed to be less "important" and their questions and problems are subordinated to the

more “urgent” task of nation building. However, letters to the editor, articles in magazines and newspapers, and journalists’ interviews, all illustrate the deeply gendered nature of the national project. In fact, such subordination of women’s issues to those of the *nation* has its precedent in the nineteenth century when nationalism and feminism first encountered one another. Female activists in Galicia believed that women could not be liberated if the *nation* had not first been liberated. Today, the long-awaited goal has been achieved and Ukraine is an independent country. Nonetheless, the goal is being redefined. Women are now told that building a modern Ukrainian nation requires not only further sacrifices from women, but also their cooperation. Berehynia is an excellent example of this, and helps illuminate the ways in which women are urged to contribute to the nation building project. Indeed, the Berehynia cult serves the nation-building project in three ways. First, it reconstructs and promotes “proper” gender roles for women, which are primarily mother and wife. Second, it inhibits women’s quest for rights by asserting that Ukrainian women have always been empowered and by appealing to a mythical matriarchal society with roots in Ukrainian antiquity. Finally, most women in Ukraine have to work because families cannot survive with a single income. Therefore, the cult of Berehynia intensifies and fosters women’s “double burden”, constructing them as the caretaker of the home and yet demanding that they also provide income for the family.

論文摘要「性別與國家建構：獨立後的烏克蘭」

本論文主要探討獨立後的烏克蘭現代國家建構及性別關係。通過性別研究角度，「有性化」了這項看似全民化的建構工作。女性在這項工作中成爲最大的輸家；她們的角色和責任都由男性釐定。她們又做回傳統婦女，回到家庭，回到廚房；她們最大的成就便是孕育國家英雄。

建構現代國家是一項艱鉅工作。在擺脫前蘇聯及俄羅斯影響的波瀾下，烏克蘭正努力建構一個「現代國家」。在這項工作中，男女角色和性別關係被重新定位；而以男性爲主導的建構過程中，男女有不同的角色定位和責任，女性被灌以特定的角色、責任、特質、信念以及學習榜樣。古代孕育女神 **Berehynia** 便成爲她們的典範。這位被重新定位和給予魅力的孕育女神成超然的學習對象。她對烏克蘭文化、語言、她的家庭和兒女的忠誠和不捨不棄是每位女性需要學習的。於是，廣大的女性被她不凡的力量迷倒。**Berehynia** 在三方面支持了「有性化」的國家建構：一方面在於她所帶出的女性責任和特質；另一方面，她亦象徵如神話般的母系社會女性擁有的強勢和權力，作爲否決現時任何女性的要求的藉口。可是，在現時經濟時況下，婦女必需工作。於是，這位女神只重申了婦女固有的「雙重負擔」，有些更背負「三重負擔」。

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Transliteration and Translation

The Library of Congress system on Ukrainian transliteration and translation is used in this thesis, except for names or places that are commonly spelled in English (for example, "Chernobyl" instead of "Chornobyl"). The capital of Ukraine, Kyiv, is used instead of the older spelling, Kiev, except for those titles of books where "Kiev" is used.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I. Background

In 1991 Ukraine declared itself independent and thus found itself faced with the dual tasks of building a state and a nation. Ukraine has never existed as an independent country except for a short period between 1917 and 1920, when the Ukrainian National Republic was established. Therefore, it is not surprising that more than ten years after it declared independence in 1991, the people and government of Ukraine are still actively engaged in a nation building project. This project requires a national revival, or perhaps more accurately, a national creation. To date, nation building is being pursued through a re-reading of identified monuments of Ukrainian culture, searching for elements that serve to construct the nation and legitimate its integrity.¹ Insofar as the monuments of Ukrainian culture are from a past that extends as far back as ninth-century Kyiv, the elements discovered are rooted in a traditional (essentially peasant) culture. Thus this revival is distinctly patriarchal in nature and as such, represents a revival of a masculine culture.²

Considerable scholarly work has been done on Ukraine's nationalism, nation building and state building. Taras Kuzio has authored a book and a number of different articles and papers on the Ukrainian nation and state.³ Andrew Wilson has analyzed Ukrainian nationalism as a minority faith when Ukraine gained independence in 1991, arguing that when Ukraine gained independence, it was a

¹ Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation Building* (London: Routledge) 1998, pp.4. Also Roman Szorpluk, "Nation-Building in Ukraine: Problems and Prospects", in *Russia, Ukraine, and the Breakup of the Soviet Union* (California: Stanford University Press) 2000, pp. 315-326.

² Solomea Pavlychko, "Feminism in post-communist Ukrainian society", in Rosalind Marsh, (ed.), *Women in Russia and Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1996, pp. 305-311.

³ Taras Kuzio, *Nation and State Building in Ukraine* (London: Routledge) 1998.

heterogeneous country, differentiated according to cultural, ethnic, economic, social, and linguistics factors.⁴ In his latest book, Wilson argues further that the *Ukrainian nation* was unexpected, emerging out of a chance series of events.⁵

While there is a substantial body of scholarship on Ukrainian national construction, typically both gender issues and women's issues are absent from this discussion. For example, in analyzing and exploring myths, national cults and historical memories, Kuzio does not discuss gender. Nor does he discuss how the identity and the imagery of women are being constructed in the post-independence nation building process. Yet, as will be discussed in more detail below, women inevitably play an important role in carrying and transmitting culture. Gender is thus essential for analyzing the discourse about the identity and image of women as it is emerging in the process of the construction and reconstruction of the nation and national identity in Ukraine. Given the fact that Ukraine is actively engaged in the project of nation building and various other transitions, women—as citizens—are assumed to be less “important” and their questions and problems are considered less “urgent” than the project as a whole. Such assumptions suggest that it is time for a critical review of how the nation building project is gendered.

To date, little work has focused on women in Ukraine.⁶ Moreover, there is very little work on the intersection of Ukrainian nation building and gender. My ideas on these issues have been influenced by R. Radhakishnan's work on post-colonial

⁴ Andrew Wilson, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the 1990s: A Minority Faith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1997.

⁵ See also Andrew Wilson, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the 1990s: A Minority Faith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1997. Andrew Wilson, *the Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation* (New Heaven: Yale University Press) 2000. Stephen Shulman. “The Cultural Foundations of Ukrainian National Identity”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 22, issue 6 (November 1999), pp. 1011-1036. Also Ilya Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy: Nationalism and leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1998.

⁶ See three books Mary Buckley (ed.), *Perestroika and The Soviet Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1992. Rosalind Marsh (ed.), *Women in Russia and Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1998. Mary Buckley (ed.), *Post-Soviet Women: From Baltic to Central Asia* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press) 1997.

nationalism and gender in India.⁷ Radhakishnan argues that Indian nationalism is a totalizing ideology. It is an *overarching* umbrella that subsumes all other issues. Thus in India today nationalists have appropriated women's questions and claim to speak on behalf of women when they speak the language and grammar of nationalism. My thinking has been further influenced by the work of Heng and Devan, who note the deeply gendered ways in which national duty is sexualized in Singapore. They argue, for example, that Singaporean women are urged to bear more children "for the sake of their nation".⁸

These ideas strike me as pertinent to the developing situation in Ukraine. For example, Ukraine has become a major center for the trafficking of women to the Middle East, Western Europe, and Asia, mostly for prostitution. Generally, the government turns a blind eye to this growing tragedy. At the same time, reports assert that some officials are involved in this trade and that they justify their activities by claiming that these women (and this business) are helping the nation by facilitating the acquisition of foreign currencies needed for development.⁹ Certainly this is a clear case where the needs of Ukrainian women are being sacrificed to the needs of "the nation". That the subordination of women's issues to the national project has been accomplished with so little scholarly attention is troubling. I propose, therefore, to critically examine the notion of nation and gender relations in post-Soviet Ukraine. I focus on the ongoing process of the construction and reconstruction of the identity of Ukrainian women and how their

⁷ R. Radhakishnan, "Nationalism, Gender, and the Narrative of Identity", in Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer and Patricia Yaeger (ed.), *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (New York: Routledge) 1992, pp. 78.

⁸ Geraldine Heng and Jandas Devan, "State Fatherhood: The Politics of Nationalism" in Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer and Patricia Yaeger (ed.), *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (New York: Routledge) 1992, pp. 109.

⁹ See the Winrock International, *Women's International Network News*, vol. 25, issue 3 (Summer 1999), p73.

gender roles in the nation are defined by the male leaders of the project.

The identity of Ukrainian women as a national construction is based on the ancient pagan goddess Berehynia. Berehynia is represented as the protectress of Ukrainian traditions and values since antiquity. Her image is used to promote the cult of the mother, the child, the home and hearth, and thus to shape the desires and ambitions of contemporary Ukrainian women.¹⁰ The cult of Berehynia became popular after the publication of *Berehynia* in 1987 by Ukrainian ethnographer Vasyl Skurativskyyi. The author called for a revival not only of folk culture but also of the traditional rural mentality. This is a mentality that is hierarchical and patriarchal; children are subordinates to parents, youngsters to elders, and wives to husbands.

When nation builders talk about the roles and duties of women, they typically refer to the example of this ancient goddess. The Berehynia cult is nationalized and legitimized; she is promoted as a model for Ukrainian women to follow. In the revival of Ukrainian culture in post-Soviet Ukraine, Berehynia is the central image and a profoundly gendered one.

In order to analyze Ukrainian nation building, the construction of Ukrainian women's identity, and their intersection in the revival of the traditional Berehynia cult, I propose to trace the roots of the Berehynia cult. The following questions will guide my analysis of nation and gender in Ukrainian nation building:

1. Do women in Ukraine think it is their duty to help their country in the project of nation building? If yes, is their conception of "duty" gendered?
2. What does it mean to be a "Ukrainian Woman", or how do Ukrainian women talk about their own identity?

¹⁰ See Solomea Pavlychko, "Progress on Hold: the Conservative Faces of Ukrainian Women", in Mary Buckley (ed.), *Post-Soviet Women: From Baltic to Central Asia* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press) 1997, pp. 219-234, and Marian J. Rubchak, "Christian virgin or pagan goddess", in Rosalind Marsh (ed.), *Women in Russia and Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1998, pp. 316.

3. Does the cult of Berehynia play a role in Ukrainian women's self-identity?

The Objectives of this essay will be:

1. To explore the discourses of "nation", "nationalism" and "nation building";
2. To examine the nature of the nation building project in post-Soviet Ukraine;
3. To look at the role of cultural revival, collective memories, myths and writing of national history in the nation building project;
4. To trace the historical root of the cult of Berehynia, its development and revival;
5. To analyze the role and function of the revival of the Berehynia cult;
6. To examine the responses of women and women's organizations to the project;
7. To investigate the roles and duties of women in the national project.

i. Methodology and Source Base

My analysis of the relationship between nation and gender in Ukraine is grounded in gender theory. Textual analysis of Vasyl Skurativskyi's book *Berehynia* will be used, and the formation and depiction of the imagery, character, and identity of Berehynia will be the primary focus. This is important for two reasons. Firstly, after the publication of V. Skurativskyi's book, *Berehynia* became popular as a model for many women in Ukraine. Emulating Berehynia was their ultimate ambition. Such popularity facilitates the construction of ideal gender roles in Ukrainian society. Secondly, the cult is frequently used by the Ukrainian government to gain the support of women. Therefore, the dynamic and interactive correlations of the political advocacy of a gendered nation project and the social construction of gender roles can be revealed in part through a close reading of the text upon which this imagery is based. Similarly, I will also explore the relations

between the cult and the project of Ukrainian nation building, in particular how the cult is manipulated in the gendered national project. My source base for this analysis will be newspapers, articles, and journals published in Ukraine, as well as those published in other places with large Ukrainian communities, such as Canada and the United States. For example, the journal *Berehynia* (founded by Vasyl Skurativskyy), *Ukrainian Weekly*, the popular Ukrainian newspaper *Den* [День/Day], and the women's magazine *Zhinka* [Жінка/Women] are important sources for this thesis.

Secondary sources are also important in this thesis. I have selected the works of Ukrainian and Western historians, political scientists, anthropologists, social scientists, artists, archaeologists, feminists, and scholars in the field of gender studies. Some United Nations reports on gender issues in Ukraine are also used.

II. Theoretical Framework

In this thesis, three major concepts are discussed, namely those of nation, nationalism and the relationship between gender and nation. These concepts are important because they are central to the process of nation building in Ukraine.

i. Nation and Nationalism

"Nation" and "nationalism" are two key concepts in this thesis. However, the meanings of "nation" and "nationalism" are themselves various and hotly debated. This presents considerable problems of definition and usage. Generally speaking, these concepts have been contested on two fronts. Firstly, scholars argue about the definitions of nation, and how nation as a form of identity differs from other types of collective identity. Secondly, there is considerable disagreement over the role of ethnicity in nationalism.

In his classic work on the nation, Ernest Renan argued that the past (historical memories, common glories and heritage) and the present (the strong desire to live together as a community) make up a nation. He stated that a nation is an "everyday plebiscite" and argued that a distinctive and common historical consciousness — the "legacy of remembrances" -- sustains the solidarity of a nation.¹¹ Max Weber explored the nation as a "prestige community", one that included its own sense of cultural mission. He argued that people are unified through myths of common descent, and that this leads to the formation of ethnic communities in the nation. Furthermore, he believed that nations have a natural political inclination, arguing that a nation is "a community which normally tends to produce a state of its own".¹²

Two other eminent scholars of the nation, Anthony Giddens and Walker Connor, have profoundly different views of what those basic terms mean. Giddens gives a clear and state-oriented definition of a nation—it is a "bordered power-container".¹³ Connor disagrees and argues that a nation is not equivalent to a state, and therefore nationalism is not the same as state patriotism. Connor's definition of a nation is close to that of Weber's, but he further attempts to distinguish between a nation and ethnic communities by the degree of self-consciousness and self-determination inherent to each. In Connor's view, an ethnic group tends to be "other-defined", whereas a nation is "self-defined".¹⁴ Despite these differences in the definition of a nation, there is one area of common ground: in a nation,

¹¹ Ernest Renan, "Qu'est-ce qu'une", Ida Mae Snyder (trans.), in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (ed.), *Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 1994, pp. 17-18

¹² Max Weber, "The Nation", in Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright-Mills (ed. & trans.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul) 1948, pp. 171, 175-177.

¹³Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism, vol. 2., the Nation-State and Violence* (Cambridge: Polity Press) 1985, pp. 119-121.

¹⁴ Walker Connor, "A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a". *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 1, issue 4 (1978), pp. 379-388. Walker Connor, "When is a Nation?", *Ethnic and Radical Studies*, vol. 13, issue 1 (1990), pp. 92-100.

"ideology and movement incorporate political and cultural dimensions".¹⁵

Scholars differ widely over the definition of nation. It is therefore not surprising that the concept of "nationalism" also stimulates considerable disagreement. Some scholars argue that national communities are in fact simply an invention of intellectuals. Eric Hobsbawm argues critically that a nation is an "invented tradition" of political elites, used for the purpose of legitimating their own power in times of revolution and change. It is thus merely a tool ruling elites utilize to legitimize and perpetuate their rule.¹⁶ On this point, Benedict Anderson agrees with Hobsbawm. He regards a modern nation as "an imagined political community", an artificial rather than a natural outcome of events. He examines critically the role and function of a national language in constructing these imagined communities.¹⁷ Anderson further argues that many elements of a nation can be understood as a form of imaginative creation that perpetually constructs and reconstructs itself as a homogeneous community.¹⁸

Ernest Gellner argues that the needs of modern societies for cultural homogeneity create nationalism, and thus nationalism is rooted in modernity.¹⁹ Anthony Giddens, and Eric Hobsbawm are also modernists who believe in the close relation between modernity and nationalism. They argue that nationalism is a novel product of modernity. Since they regard both nations and nationalism as modern phenomena, they believe that neither have natural roots in the past.²⁰

¹⁵ John Hutchison, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism* (London: Allen and Unwin) 1987, pp. 12-19. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (ed.), *Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 1994, pp. 4.

¹⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, and Terence Ranger (ed.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1983, pp. 13-14.

¹⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York: Verso) 1991, pp. 36.

¹⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York: Verso) 1991, pp. 36-46.

¹⁹ Ernest Gellner, "Nationalism", in *Thought and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1964, pp. 158-162.

²⁰ See also Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell), 1983.

Anthony D. Smith argues that modernists fail to consider the “weight of pre-existing cultures and ethnicities” as well as the pre-modern roots of nations. As a result, they neglect the sentiment of cultural identity in nations and nationalism.²¹ He focuses particularly on nationalism’s sources of power—the “myths, memories, traditions, and symbol of ethnic heritages and the ways in which a popular *living past*” are re-discovered, re-interpreted and re-energized by nationalist intellectuals in constituting the sentiment of cultural identity.²² In opposition to the failure of modernists to more fully understand nationalism, Smith proposes an approach he calls *historical ethno-symbolism*. The central theme of this approach is how shared memories relate to collective cultural identities. In Smith’s view, shared memories play an integral role in the formation of collective cultural identities and are essential not only to the survival but also to the destiny of such identities.²³ He argues that nations are historical, that is, they are formed over a long period of time and continue into the modern period. To understand nations and nationalism, it is necessary to investigate their historical roots. Thus historians play an important role in the writing and rediscovery of the shared long-term memories of members of nations, in composing their *ethno-history*, and thus in the cultivation of these collective cultural identities.²⁴

Smith’s analysis is interesting and insightful for three reasons. First, he offers an approach to the analysis of nations and nationalism that emphasizes the origins, cultural elements and the cultivation of shared memories as elements in the

²¹ Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press) 1999, pp. 9.

²² Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press) 1999, pp. 9-11, pp. 15.

²³ Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press) 1999, pp. 18-19.

²⁴ Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press) 1999, pp. 29-31.

formation of collective identities. Secondly, the ethno-history approach gives a more comprehensive analysis of the concepts of both nation and nationalism, as well as emphasizing their historicity. Thirdly, in understanding nation and nationalism, the role that historians play in rediscovering ethnic myths and memories is critically important. Some scholars even regard historians as *nation builders*, seeing them as highly significant in nation building projects.

John Hutchinson's work focuses on political nationalism and cultural nationalism. Interestingly, he points out that many nationalist historians, for example the Ukrainian Mykhailo Hrushevskyy, are "myth-making" intellectuals "who combine a "romantic" search for meaning with a scientific zeal to establish this on authoritative foundations"²⁵ and who typically form a "mythic" pattern, which includes a founding myth, a golden age, an age of decay and the destiny of regeneration. With the help of scientific advances, documents of pre-modern histories can be recovered through the findings of archaeology and the work of folklorists. He uses the Ukrainian case to illustrate his argument. The re-discovery of a Ukrainian golden past is supported by the parallel development of scientific research. Thus "myth" and "science" come together in the intellectual activity of nation building. The former is supported and "proven" by the latter.²⁶

In view of intensifying globalization, the forces of nationalism and internationalism may need to be balanced against one another. Since 1991, a new wave of nationalism has emerged as a result of the formation of fourteen new states after the breakdown of the Soviet Union. John Armstrong's work on nationalism in the post-Soviet period focuses on the antagonistic relationship

²⁵ John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism* (London: Allen and Unwin) 1987, pp. 12-14.

²⁶ John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism* (London: Allen and Unwin) 1987, pp. 12-14.

between intensifying economic, cultural and political globalization and the resurgence of ethnic nationalisms. For example, he argues that nationalism in Ukraine is only visible in Western Ukraine.²⁷ In his analysis of voting behavior on the eve of Ukrainian independence, he regards independence as a mixed blessing. Some people organized strikes against it, although the majority of people in Ukraine supported it. The Crimea question perpetually affects the status quo of the newly independent country. Such analysis reveals the complexity of the context of nationalism even before it comes into being.

The concept of national identity has also been affected by the emergence of globalized economies. Homi Bhaba, for example, discusses the Self/Other split. He argues that the everyday performativity of Self re-defines national identity. Such re-definition is only formed when there is reference to an Other.²⁸ Certainly, the concept of Self and Other in relation to the nation is relevant to the Ukrainian case. In particular it problematizes the very meaning of Ukrainian *national identity*. Ukrainian identity is formed with reference to other contiguous or competing identities, for instance *Russian*. One visible example is in everyday language. In order to distinguish Ukrainian language from Russian, a lot of Ukrainian phrases and vocabularies have been revised and re-energized to more clearly differentiate these two languages. As a result of the globalized economic system, there is increasing contact between peoples of different national identities. Such contact constantly leads to the definition and re-definition of national identities. Post-Soviet Ukrainian identities are constructed on the Self/Other split. Ukrainians define themselves as "not Russians". It is thus against the reflection of Russian

²⁷ John Armstrong, "Nationalism in Former Soviet Empire", *Problems of Communism*, vol. 41, issue 1-2 (January-April 1992), pp. 129-133.

²⁸ Homi Bhaba, (ed.), *The Nation and Narration* (London, New York: Routledge) 1990, pp. 1-6.

identity that Ukrainian identity is constructed.²⁹

ii. Ukrainian Nationalism

Many scholars interested in Ukrainian nationalism and nation building apply several ideas and definitions of nation and nationalism to the Ukrainian context. To be precise, they concentrate on ethnic nationalism, or Ukrainophone nationalism.³⁰ In these analyses, language plays an important role in distinguishing nationalism in the Ukrainian case. This may be problematic. Using Smith's ethnic categories, "populations distinguished by outsiders as possessing the attributes of a common name or emblem, a shared cultural element (usually language or religion) and a link with a particular territory", Ukrainian nationalism is weak and questionable. Ukraine has not existed as a separate entity for very long, Ukrainians were not regarded as "Ukrainians" by others historically, and the Ukrainian language is not a common language among Ukrainians. Here it is useful to recall Smith's definition of *ethnie* (ethnic communities) –"as a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories and one or more common elements of culture, including an association with a homeland, and some degree of solidarity, at least among the elites".³¹ This is interesting and relevant to the Ukrainian case. Ukrainian nation builders are currently re-reading and redefining monuments and integrating them into the myths of Ukrainian ancestry, homeland and common memories. Smith analysis also includes some African and Asian countries that try to turn post-colonies into nations through the construction of myths, symbols, and historical memories, and therefore to build nations based on pre-existing ethnic

²⁹ See Taras Kuzio, "Identity and Nation Building in Ukraine: Defining the 'Other'", in *Ethnicities*, vol. 1, no. 3 (December 2001), pp. 343-366.

³⁰ Taras Kuzio, "Nationalism in Ukraine: Towards a New Framework", *Politics*, vol.20, no. 2 (May 2000), pp. 77-86.

³¹ Anthony D. Smith, "The Origins of Nations", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 12, issue 3 (1989), pp. 349-356.

ties.³² Similar processes can be found in Ukraine's nation building project. Myths, symbols and historical memories are also manipulated in Ukraine's nation building project, as will be discussed in a later chapter. The manipulation and creation of national imagery is critically important to the Ukrainian nation building project.

iii. Gender and Nation

Does a nation have a gender? Is a nation gendered? These are critical questions that need to be addressed.

The relation of gender and nation challenges the clichéd position of women in the political sphere. "Nation" and "nationalism" are political concepts; they are written and formulated mostly by male political scientists or male researchers. In these concepts, men and women are not distinguished. No distinctions are made when addressing positions, roles, duties and the rights of men and women in the political sphere. Nonetheless, in practice, men and women do have different roles, duties and rights. Politics and the political sphere are male-oriented. In these arenas women have few channels to voice their views. Male leaders claim to speak on behalf of the whole population (read both men and women) when in fact they speak on behalf of their own interests.

Although the gender-blind approach in analyzing nation and national projects is often critiqued because of its insensitivity to much of their complexity,³³ it is still useful in illustrating how women are incorporated into national projects and how masculine and feminine identities are constructed and reconstructed in these projects. The relations of gender and nation are gaining attention from scholars.

To correlate gender and nation or nationalism is not easy. Traditionally, studies

³² Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press) 1999, pp. 9-10.

³³ Deniz Kandiyoti, "Guest editor's introduction. The awkward relationship: gender and nationalism", *Nation and Nationalism*, vol. 6, issue 4 (2000), pp.491-494.

on nation and nationalism in academic fields are essentially masculine. A male perspective is typically taken for granted. Thus, the inclusion of gender in discussions of nation and nationalism is quite a recent trend. Gender as a category of analysis stimulates scholars to look from a totally new and previously ignored perspective, to challenge and reconstruct the mainstream male-centered knowledge system and scholarly disciplines such as history and political science.

The work of Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias attempts to engender national projects. They argue that women's links to nations are complex because of their dual roles as citizens and as a social category that has special functions vital to the reproduction of nations themselves.³⁴ They analyze women's role in national reproduction, national culture and national citizenship. They argue that women are vital to the reproduction of the nation in at least five different ways: as biological reproducers of ethnic collectives and groups; as ideological reproducers and transmitters of culture; as signifiers of ethnic/national differences; as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses; and as participants in economic, social and political realms.

In a later work, Yuval-Davis carries this analysis further, identifying the correlations of gender to various categories of national projects. She further discusses how gender relations, national projects and processes operate in an interactive way, shaping the "positions and positionings" of women. She questions mainstream scholars, who essentially talk about the importance of state bureaucrats or intellectuals in the "production and reproduction" of the nation, but ignore women. She argues "that it is women not (just?) the bureaucrats and

³⁴ Nira Yuval-Davis, and Floya Anthias, (ed.), *Women-Nation-State* (Houndmills, Basingstoke and Hampshire: Macmillan) 1989, pp.6-11.

intellectuals who reproduce nations, biologically, culturally, and symbolically”.³⁵

III. Significance

This thesis aims at engendering the project of nation building in Ukraine. It aims to explore and uncover the nature of such a project from a gendered perspective and thus extend our understanding of the Ukrainian nation building processes.

As one of the most important and fundamental reforms, nation building is obviously a political subject. Yet politics and political discourse are male-dominated. They are part of the public-private, male-female configuration. Talking about women in the political sphere challenges this academic norm. Interest in the relationship between nation and gender is growing in academia. This thesis hopes to make a contribution to the current discussion about nation and gender.

States in transition prioritize various reforms and issues. Certainly, for most states women’s issues and gender issues are regarded as less urgent and less important. Both Russia and China represent good examples of the low priority given to women and gender issues in transitional states. Post-Soviet Ukraine offers another example.

Women and gender issues in post-Soviet Ukraine are rarely addressed. Other reforms such as political and economic reforms take center stage. Therefore, this thesis aims at filling this gap. Its goal is to emphasize that the so-called “all people” project is indeed profoundly gendered. Women and men have different duties and, critically, women’s duties are defined by male leaders. Nonetheless, these gendered national duties are seldom made explicit or discussed by Ukrainian nation

³⁵ Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage Publications) 1997, pp. 3.

builders, scholars in the field of Ukrainian studies, or even women's organizations in Ukraine. Thus, this thesis aims at exploring the fundamentally gendered nature of the Ukrainian nation building project.

IV. Outline of Chapters

The goal of the thesis is to engender the nation building project in post-Soviet Ukraine. Thus, the first section of the thesis explores the content of Ukrainian nation building, including the motivating forces behind the nation building project, the impact of Russification, and the diversity of its population. Arguably, contemporary Ukraine's nation building resembles the Cossack experience in the seventeenth century. Certainly, the Cossack state was a military and a male-dominated state in which women had almost no place and no power. Thus, the present recovery and use of the Cossack state in constituting the Ukrainian nation continues this male-oriented tradition. Therefore, it is important to discuss the nature of the Cossack state and how it is now idealized and nationalized as central to Ukraine's national construction.

The second section of the thesis aims to analyze the content of the nation building project. This part contributes to the thesis in two ways. Firstly, it provides factual information about the nation building project in Ukraine. Secondly, it critically examines the context of this project. It particularly highlights the lack of gender analysis in the discussion of Ukrainian nation building.

The third section contributes to the goal of this thesis by attempting to fill this gap. It analyses women's national duties from a gender perspective. It examines the different national duties of women and men in the nation building project, and thus this section proves the gendered nature of the project.

The fourth section discusses the responses of non-governmental women's organizations, women, and mass media to the call of cultural revival and the cult of Berehynia in Ukraine. It also explores some of the reasons for the growing popularity of the cult of Berehynia among women. Nonetheless, being Berehynia by staying at home is an unrealizable dream for most. In reality, the great majority of women must work. The cult of Berehynia intensifies women's "double burden". Thus, this section contributes to the thesis by uncovering some of the problems of these sexualized national duties.

Chapter 2: Nation Building in the Post-Soviet Ukraine

I. Introduction

On 24 August 1991, the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (Ukrainian SSR) declared independence from the former Soviet Union by a vote of three hundred and forty-six to one. The Declaration of Independence was then published declaring "Ukraine an independent and democratic state".¹ A general vote was held in the Ukrainian SSR on the issue of independence. A vast majority, 90.2 per cent of the population, supported independence. On 1 December 1991, a referendum was held to confirm independence.

Although Ukraine appeared on the world stage as an independent and sovereign country about eleven years ago, some scholars and Ukrainian historians argue that it is not a new country. Paul R. Magocsi, a leading historian of Ukraine comments that Ukraine "was hardly a new country".² Ilya Prizel, another famous expert on Ukrainian affairs makes a similar statement "Ukraine is by no means a new nation".³ Both argue that Ukrainians have been a separate ethnic group for centuries and yet did not have their own state. Therefore, when Ukraine gained its independence as a state in 1991, it was a hidden state that was revealed on the world stage.

This chapter focuses on the ongoing project of nation building in post-Soviet Ukraine. Ukrainian nation building refers to the redefinition and amalgamation of various identities into a singular Ukrainian national identity, one that compels both unity and loyalty. Such redefinition is vital to Ukrainian nation building because of

¹ *News From Ukraine* (Kyiv), 1st September 1991.

² Paul Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press) 1996, pp.vii.

³ Ilya Prizel, "Nation-Building and Foreign Policy", in Sharon L. Wolchik, Volodymyr Zvighyanich (ed.), *Ukraine: The Search for a National Identity* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers) 2000, pp.11.

its diverse cultural, ethnic, socio-economic, and linguistic circumstances. Facing antagonist forces of separation and division, the Ukrainian government believes that a nation will bind the heterogeneous population together and thus will prevent it from falling apart. Changes in the historical representations of Ukraine, and the revival of Ukrainian culture are two of the various sites of nationalizing that are under way in the cultivation of a Ukrainian collective identity.

Yet, the historical foundation of the Ukrainian nation building project is a problematic one, since Ukraine had never existed before as an independent nation, except for the short period of the Ukrainian National Republic (1917-1920). Therefore, the first section of this chapter will trace the historical statelessness of Ukraine and the development of the struggle for autonomy and independence beginning in the late nineteenth century. This section serves not only as the background for the development of present-day Ukraine but also sheds light on some of the justifications for the choices being made in the contemporary process of nation building.

This chapter also deals with the "Ukrainian Question". This refers to the historical aspects of Ukraine and Ukrainians in Russian history and historiography. The Russian perception of Ukraine and Ukrainians is important, not only because this impacts the legitimacy of Ukraine as an independent country throughout history, but also because it influences Russian-Ukrainian relations today.

The second section of this chapter focuses on the Cossack state (1648-1711), also known as the Hetmanate. The Cossack experience occupies a special position in Ukrainian national history. This is not only because various historians believe that the Cossacks were a democratic and freedom loving people and thus embodied the best characteristics of Ukrainians, but also because the Cossacks were believed to have adopted a defensive and antagonistic attitude against neighboring powers

in the effort to preserve their freedom. Today, the Cossack experience is largely idealized and nationalized as the proto-Ukrainian state. Cossack symbols and figures are being assimilated into the process of nation building as important symbols of the new Ukrainian state of today. Therefore, it is essential to analyze the nature of the Cossack state, which was essentially military and male-oriented, and thus its implications for the position of women in the current nation building project.

The third part of the chapter analyzes the content of contemporary Ukrainian nation building. The project of nation building is complex and vital to the Ukrainian government and its peoples because it goes back to the fundamental ideological foundation of the Ukrainian nation, its legitimacy and justification as a nation, and the sources of identity for its citizens. The project also affects the people of Ukraine in various aspects of their lives. It also has an impact on Ukraine's relations with other countries, particularly Russia. The project attracts enormous attention from political scientists, scholars of nationalism, ethnic relations, and experts of Eastern European affairs. Yet, the nature of the project is essentially Ukrainian-centered, nationalist and male-dominated.

II. Ukraine: Historical Statelessness

i. The Borders

The name "Ukraine" [Україна/ Ukraïna] means undefined or non-specific borderland.⁴ The term "Ukraine" first appeared in the chronicles in 1187, upon the death of Prince Volodymyr of Pereislav. The Hypatian text of the *Primary Chronicle*

⁴ Paul Magosci, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press) 1996, pp.171.

writes "the *ukraïna* groaned with grief for him".⁵ The term *ukraïna* meant non-specified, and undefined lands.⁶ Geographically, it was known as a buffer zone between the eastern and western parts of Europe. Because of its strategic importance, Ukraine was historically vulnerable to various powers, mainly Poland, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Imperial Russia and later the Soviet Union. Consequently, Ukraine was not autonomous, nor did other great powers of that time regard Ukraine as a separate polity. The inhabitants of the regions were not called Ukrainians. In fact, they were known as the "Little Russians", or the little brothers of the Great Russians, in familial terms. Its culture was regarded as a folk culture of the peasantry and not considered comparable to "high" Russian culture. The Ukrainian language was also considered to be merely a local dialect of Russian, one spoken only by peasants.

Ukraine did not refer to a specific territory until the Cossacks claimed it as their romanticized "fatherland" or "mother". After 1917 the Hetmanate began to use the term "Ukraine" to indicate the lands ethnic Ukrainians inhabited in order to arouse nationalistic feeling.⁷ The Central Rada (council) of Ukraine and the Hetmanate named the country the Ukrainian National Republic [*Ukraïnska Narodna Respublyka*] (1917-1920) when they attempted, for the first time in Ukrainian history, to create an independent Ukraine. Therefore, the name "Ukraine" has had different meanings over time, and has served different aims.

Ukraine as a geographic term refers to the territory of present-day Ukraine, a territory that has been under the rule of various foreign powers for most of its history, in particular Poland, Lithuania and Russia. An independent Ukrainian polity

⁵ According to the Hypatian text of the *Primary Chronicle* (copied in the 15th century. Quoted in Paul Magosci, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press) 1996, pp. 171.

⁶ Paul Magosci, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press) 1996, pp.171.

⁷ Paul Magosci, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press) 1996, pp.171.

has only existed twice in the modern era. The first one was the Ukrainian National Republic (1917-1920) before it was crushed by the Bolsheviks. The second is the present day Ukraine that largely occupies the land of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic of the former Soviet Union.

ii. The 'Ukrainian Question'

The "Ukrainian Question"⁸ centers on the nature of the Russian-Ukrainian relationship. It refers to the historical aspects of Ukraine, Ukrainians, and their culture in relation to Russian history and historiography. Russians did not regard Ukrainians as a separate ethnic group. Instead, Russians perceived Ukrainians in terms of the familial metaphor "little brothers". They were thus distinct but akin and most importantly, subordinate.⁹ They were members of the Eastern Slavs, of which there were three groups—Great Russians (Russians), Little Russians (Ukrainians), and White Russians (Belarusians). They came from the same family, but their positions were hierarchical. The terminology used assumes and expresses this hierarchy. The Russians were "Great" and "Big" brothers, indicating their leadership and superiority in the family. The Ukrainians were "Little"; they had no privilege, no greatness and were primarily constructed as followers and subordinates. The hierarchy applied equally to the Great Russian views on Ukraine's history, culture and languages. Legitimated by the familial metaphor, Ukrainians and the lands they inhabited were viewed as integral parts of the Russian Empire. Therefore, the Ukrainian challenge, or more precisely Ukrainian nationalism, was described as a "problem" because it represented separatism that would not only destabilize the integrity of the Russian state but would also

⁸ Roman Szporluk, *Russia, Ukraine, and the Breakup of the Soviet Union* (California: Stanford University Press) 2000, Forward xxvii.

⁹ Roman Szporluk, *Russia, Ukraine, and the Breakup of the Soviet Union* (California: Stanford University Press) 2000, Forward xi.

undermine its unity and thus destroy the "family". Any ideas about Ukrainian independence were thus to be eradicated at all costs. As a result, all struggles for an independent Ukrainian nation were put down by the "elder brother".

The familial metaphor also affected Russian historiography on Ukraine and Ukrainians. For centuries, Russians regarded Ukraine and Ukrainians as part of the great Imperial Russian Empire. As Zbigniew Brzezinski argues, "without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire".¹⁰ Z. Brzezinski's statement critically pinpoints the importance of Ukraine and Ukrainians to Russia.

Russian historiography has not only significantly affected the Ukrainian claims to independence and identity, but is also an important factor in the shaping of Russian-Ukrainian relations in the post-Soviet period.

iii. Russian Historiography: Origins of Ethnicity and Culture

Russian historiography about Ukraine and Ukrainians was a significant factor in the determination of Ukrainian status. Therefore, it is necessary to trace the development of Russian historiography focused on Ukraine and Ukrainians.

The Russian historians Vasilii M. Tatishchev (1686—1750) and Nikolai M. Karamzin (1766—1826) believed that Russian culture and the Russian state emerged around Kyiv in the ninth century. Both of them affirmed that Kyivan Rus' was the beginning of the Great Russians, who were one of the three major groups of the Kyivan State. Little Russians (Ukrainians) and White Russians were the other two.¹¹

¹⁰ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Premature Partnership" in *Foreign Affairs*, vol.73, no.2 (March-April 1994), pp.80.

¹¹ Paul Magosci, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press) 1996, pp. 13. See also Thomas Sanders (ed.), *Historiography of Imperial Russia. The Profession and Writing of History in Multinational State* (New York, London: M.E. Sharpe) 1999, pp.

By the nineteenth century, the main theme of Russian historiography centered on asserting a linear relation from the ruling house of Kyivan Rus', through Muscovy to the Russian Empire. These historians took a dynastic approach to Russian history, exemplified by Karamzin's twelve-volume *History of the Russian State* [*Istoriia Gosudarstva Rossiiskago*]. His books glorified the tsars as the legitimate rulers and as the descendents of the Kyivan Rus' rulers. Essentially, genealogical lineage and descent was emphasized.¹² Also, Kyiv was constructed as the "mother of Russian cities" because it was the first political center of the Russian people. On the grounds that Muscovite princes were the legitimate heirs of Kyivan Rus', these historians argued that the destiny of the princes was to once again unite all the former lands of Kyivan Rus' under the authority of the Muscovite throne.¹³

The traditional view identified Great Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians as Russians, with Ukrainians and Belarusians as sub-groups of the Great Russians. Modern Russian historians continued this historiography. Sergei M. Solovev (1820-1879) and Vasillii Kliuchevsky (1841—1911) included Ukrainian and Belarusian affairs when they wrote about the history of Russia, aiming at the assimilation of Ukrainians and Belarusians into the "all-Russian" people's identity.¹⁴ Yet, great Russians were certainly at the center when these affairs were recorded. Although Russian historians believed in a single Russian identity (Great, Little and White Russians), they were gradually forced to acknowledge the differences

334-362.

¹² Paul Magosci, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press) 1996, pp. 14. See also Thomas Sanders (ed.), *Historiography of Imperial Russia. The Profession and Writing of History in Multinational State* (New York, London: M.E. Sharpe) 1999, pp.334-362, 379-384.

¹³ Paul Magosci, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press) 1996, pp. 14. See also Thomas Sanders (ed.), *Historiography of Imperial Russia. The Profession and Writing of History in Multinational State* (New York, London: M.E. Sharpe) 1999, pp. 205

¹⁴ Paul Magosci, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press) 1996, pp. 15. See also Thomas Sanders (ed.), *Historiography of Imperial Russia. The Professional and Writing of History in Multinational State* (New York, London: M.E. Sharpe) 1999, pp. 334-362.

between these three groups of people. In the 1920s, Russian historian Nikolai Trubetskoi accepted that Ukrainian and Great Russian culture were not the same before 1654.¹⁵ Yet, the admission of differences was potentially dangerous. It could not only undermine the idea of a single Russia identity, but also threatened the link between Kyiv and Moscow on which imperial Russian history was built. Furthermore, Russians could continue to disregard the Ukrainians' challenge to the idea of a singular, hierarchical Russian identity provided that they possessed the political, military and economic power necessary to suppress any opposition. The attitude of Russia towards Ukraine could be best summarized in the words of Dmitrii Likhachev, the dean of twentieth century Russian specialists of Kyivan Rus'.

Over the course of the centuries following their division into two entities, Russia and Ukraine have formed not only a political but also a culturally dualistic unity. Russian culture is meaningless without Ukrainian, as Ukrainian is without Russian.¹⁶

For generations, Russian intellectuals believed that the partition of Poland, where a vast majority of the population was ethnic Ukrainians and Belarusians, was necessary to liberate the Eastern Slavs from Catholic Polish rule. Thus, the partition of Poland was viewed as necessary to the integrity of the Russian Empire. At the same time, Ukrainian identity and Ukrainian separatism was state-mandated and manipulated by the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Poles, with the aim of destroying Russia from within.¹⁷ Although the inclusion of Ukraine and Ukrainians might be an "evil" in the light of theories of the self-determination of nationalities,

¹⁵ Paul Magosci, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press) 1996, pp. 13-15.

¹⁶ Dmitrii S. Likhachev, Nicolai N. Petro (ed.), Christina Sever (trans.), *Reflections on Russia* (Boulder: Westview Press) 1991, pp. 74.

¹⁷ Roman Szporluk, *Russia, Ukraine, and the Breakup of the Soviet Union* (California: Stanford University Press) 2000, pp.335.

it was regarded as a lesser evil when compared with the potential threats from Poland.¹⁸

Traditional Russian historiography was largely accepted by Western scholars working in the field of Russian history. Many of them view the "Rus" of Kyivan Rus' as Russians. It would, however, be problematic to write Kyivan Rus' as "Kyivan Russia".¹⁹ Textbooks of Russian history written by western scholars continue to adopt the imperial Russian historiography acknowledging the genealogical lineage from Kyivan Rus' to Muscovy and to Imperial Russia. The authors also recognize the Muscovite princes as the legitimate heirs to the Kyivan Rus' throne. Such Russo-centric historiography would benefit from a consideration of Ukrainian historiography.

iv. Ukrainian Historiography: Suppression and Revival

For approximately half a century, the study of Ukrainian history separate from Great Russian history was prohibited in the Russian Empire. Histories written about Ukraine were written as histories of Little Russians. The reasons for prohibition were rooted in the Russian view of Ukraine and Ukrainians. Suppression of the Ukrainian language and the study and research of Ukrainian history undermined Ukrainian historical development and knowledge. Ukrainian was not an academic subject, neither was the use of the word "Ukraine" approved in academies. Writing in the Ukrainian language was also banned under the Valuev decree of 1863 and the Ems ukase of 1876. As a result, the language was mostly classified as one used by the "unlearned" and peasants. It was not a "scholarly language".

¹⁸ Konstantin F. Shtepa, 'The "Lesser Evil" Formula', in Cyril E. Black, (ed.), *Rewriting Russian History: Soviet Interpretations of Russia's Past* (New York: Vintage), 2nd ed., rev., 1962, pp. 105-106.

¹⁹ For example, "Kievan Russia" was used in John M. Thompson, *Russia and The Soviet Union: A Historical Introduction from the Kievan State to the Present* (Boulder, Oxford, San Francisco: Westview Press), 3rd ed., 1994, 12-13.

Not until the nineteenth century, did Ukrainians' challenge this one-sided Russian historiography. One of the most influential and pioneering histories of Ukraine was the *History of the Rus' People* [*Istoriia Rusov*]. The authorship is uncertain, but it was one of the first works that considered Ukraine as neither a province of Poland nor Russia. It gave Ukraine an independent status and Ukrainians a separate identity.

The foremost challenge of Ukrainian historians to the foundation of the Russian Empire was with regard to the link between ancient Kyivan Rus' and the Muscovite state. The issue of the true heir to Kyivan Rus' was fiercely debated between Russian historian Mikhail Pogodin (1800–1875) and Ukrainian historian Mykhailo Maksymovych (1804–1873).²⁰ But it was Ukraine's greatest modern historian, Mykhailo Hrushevskyi (1866–1934), who wrote Ukraine's national history, stretching from the ancient golden era of Kyivan Rus' to the early modern period of the Ukrainian people -- *The History of Ukraine-Rus'*. This work continues to serve as the *national history* of Ukrainians, in that it argues that Ukraine ought to be a nation in its own right. Based on the argument that the Muscovite state should not and could not be the heir of Kyivan Rus', Mykhailo Hrushevskyi secured for Ukraine and Ukrainians a foundation of legitimacy for claims that Ukraine was a separate entity with the right to be a separate state. The *History* suggested a linear relationship between Kyivan Rus' and modern Ukraine. It challenged Russia's monopolistic claim to be the successor of the ancient state and, in doing so, also challenged the foundation upon which Russian history and historiography had been built.²¹ The *History* and Mykhailo Hrushevskyi both announced and symbolized the

²⁰ Frank Sysyn, "Introduction to Mykhailo Hrushevsky's *History of Ukraine-Rus'*", in Thomas Sanders (ed.), *Historiography of Imperial Russia. The Professional and Writing of History in Multinational State* (New York, London: M.E. Sharpe) 1999, pp.344-373.

²¹ Mykhailo Hrushevskyi, "The Traditional Scheme of "Russian" History and the Problem of a

revival of national consciousness of Ukrainians in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century as well.

Similarly, another prominent Ukrainian historian, Mykola Kostomarov (1817-1885), argued that Ukrainians, Russians and Poles were three different groups. He critically and directly challenged the traditional authoritative Russian historian N. Karamzin's scheme of history.²² He insisted that Ukrainian uniqueness provided the legitimization for an independent Ukrainian state. His work *Two Rus' Nationalities* [*Dve Russkie Narodnosti*], which became the gospel of Ukrainian nationalism, described and analyzed Ukrainian uniqueness and the differences between Ukrainians and Russians.

The Ukrainians are characterized by individualism, the Great Russians by collectivism...Ukrainians were able to create among themselves free forms of society which controlled no more than was required...they were strong in themselves without infringing on personal liberties....²³

He also marked the differences between Ukrainians and Poles.

To be sure, there is a deep gulf which separates the Poles and the Ukrainians, a gulf which may never be bridged...the Poles are aristocratic while the Ukrainians are a democratic people....The Polish nobility has tried to remain within the limitations of its own class; in Ukraine, on the other hand, the people have equal status and rights....²⁴

Rational Organization of the History of the Eastern Slavs", in *From Kievan Rus' To Modern Ukraine: Formation of the Ukrainian Nation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Ukrainian Studies) 1984, pp.355-364.

²² Thomas Prymak, "Mykola Kostomarov As a Historian", in Thomas Sanders (ed.), *Historiography of Imperial Russia. The Professional and Writing of History in Multinational State* (New York, London: M.E. Sharpe) 1999, pp.332-333.

²³ Dmytro Doroshenko, *Survey of Ukrainian Historiography* (New York Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the U.S.), 1957, vol. V-VI, no. 4 (18)-1, 2(19-20), pp. 137-139.

²⁴ Dmytro Doroshenko, *Survey of Ukrainian Historiography* (New York: the Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the U.S.), 1957, vol. V-VI, no. 4 (18)-1, 2(19-20), pp. 137-139.

Ukrainian independence in 1991 further troubled the myth of Russian identity. Critically, Kyiv, the ancient center of Kyivan Rus', the cradle of Russian civilization, and the place where the myth of Russian identity was generated, had become the capital of another country. This represented a serious blow to Russians and Russia. Oleg Platonov, doctor of economic sciences, member of the Russian Writer's Union, and the author of *Russian Labor* and *Russian Civilization*, expressed his views on Ukraine.

The creation of the "states" of Ukraine and Belorussia has an artificial and temporary character...When I speak of the Russian nation...I have in mind all its geographical parts including Ukrainians and Belorussians.²⁵

Another prominent and influential scholar Alexander Solzhenitsyn questioned Ukrainian territorial claims. According to him, Ukraine could only have the right to rule those regions inhabited by a majority of Ukrainian-speaking people. He condemned Lenin's borders arrangements, arguing that they paid insufficient attention to issues of ethnicity, and thus had created the problems on Ukraine's borders today.²⁶

Russian perceptions of Ukraine and Ukrainians have been a significant factor in denying Ukraine's demand to be an independent state. This historical statelessness has various effects on today's nation building project. As Ukraine has not had a state and a nation of its own, it has been required to build one. Ukrainian historiography has thus occupied a central place in Ukraine's nation building project, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

²⁵ "Mir russkoi tsivilizatsii", in *Literaturnaia Rossiia*, no.6 (11 February 1997), pp.7. Quoted in Roman Szporluk, *Russia, Ukraine, and the Breakup of the Soviet Union* (California: Stanford University Press) 2000, pp.333.

²⁶ Roman Szporluk, *Russia, Ukraine, and the Breakup of the Soviet Union* (California: Stanford University Press) 2000, pp.333.

III. The Cossack State

i. Origin/Nature of the Cossack State

A relatively distinct polity in Ukraine can be traced back to the Cossacks of the seventeenth century. The Cossacks and the Cossack state both occupy a special position in the national history of Ukraine.

Some historians maintain that the Cossacks were originally a group of borderland defenders or warriors who sought to protect their homeland from the invasions of foreign powers around it. These Cossacks may have been fishermen, hunters, farmers and traders. Others argue that they were people who fled from Central Russia and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to escape from oppression and famine.

By the fifteenth century, the Cossacks were occasionally employed by Lithuanian officials for borderland protection. The Cossacks lived in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth for more than a century. Their large-scale migration to Zaporizhzhia happened as a result of the Union of Lublin in 1569.²⁷ The Cossacks were self-governing and had their own leaders, who were called hetman. Arguably, the Cossack era led to the gradual development of a proto-Ukrainian identity.

The Cossack state did not survive long after the Treaty of Pereiaslav in 1654. The last Cossack fortress, the Sich fortress, was finally destroyed in 1775 and the Cossack settlement was dissolved into "New Russia".²⁸ Yet, the Cossack state serves as a special and a unique historical experience and attracts extensive study

²⁷ Paul Magosci, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press) 1996, pp.181.

²⁸ Andrew Wilson, *Ukrainian Nationalism in 1990s: A Minority Faith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1997, pp. 7

and research by historians in the Ukrainian studies field. The prominent Ukrainian historian Mykhailo Hrushevskyi credited the Cossacks with cultivating a separate Ukrainian identity.

The Cossack experience was a positive factor contributing to the legitimacy of a separate Ukrainian identity. Their success was remembered by Ukrainians. Since the nineteenth century, the Cossacks, the Zaporizhzhian Sich, and the hetmanate have been regarded as part of a populist movement against the authority and oppression of the Russian Empire. They have also served as a symbol of continuous struggle for self-determination and autonomy against strong and aggressive neighbors.²⁹ The Cossacks are often praised for their "democratic" tradition as compared to the Polish oligarchy and Muscovite autocracy.³⁰ Most importantly, patriotism and loyalty towards a Ukrainian state and Ukrainian culture are celebrated in this imagery.

The life of the Zaporizhzhian Cossacks was reflected in a travel diary first published by 1660. Written by a Frenchman, Guillaume le Vasseur de Beauplan, it described the Cossacks as a people who

...greatly value liberty, and would not want to live without it. That is why the Cossacks, when they consider themselves to be kept under too tight a rein, are so inclined to revolt and rebel against the lords of their country. Beyond that, they are faithless people, treacherous, perfidious, and to be trusted only with circumspection. They are a very robust people, easily enduring heat and cold, hunger and thirst. They are tireless in war, daring, courageous, or rather reckless, placing no value on their own lives.³¹

²⁹ O.W. Gerus, "Manifestations of the Cossack Idea in Modern History: The Cossack Legacy and its Impact", *Ukrains'kyi istoryk*, no. 1-2 (1986), pp. 22-39.

Frank Sysyn, "The Reemergence of the Ukrainian Nation and Cossack Mythology", *Social Research*, vol. 58 issue 4 (Winter 1991), pp.845-846.

³⁰ Frank Sysyn, "The Reemergence of the Ukrainian Nation and Cossack Mythology", *Social Research*, vol. 58 issue 4 (Winter 1991), pp.847-850.

³¹ Guillaume Le Vasseur, Sieur de Beauplan, Andrew B. Pernal and Dennis F. Essar, (trans.), *A Description of Ukraine* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press) 1993, pp.11-13.

The autonomy of the Cossack state within the Polish lands ended in 1654 after a failed uprising of the Cossacks, led by hetman Bohdan Khmelnytskyi. The signing of the Treaty of Pereiaslav in 1654 between the Cossacks and the Russian has generated great controversy over its nature and effects. Russian historians typically regard the treaty as a long-awaited re-unification of Cossacks and the Muscovite state. Ukrainian historians take a different view. They regard it as the loss of a separate Cossack state. At the same time, however, they also interpret the treaty as one signed on equal terms between two sovereign nations. Khmelnytskyi's signing of the treaty is also a subject of considerable controversy. The prominent Ukrainian poet, writer, and patriot Taras Shevchenko, condemned Khmelnytskyi as being responsible for his people's "enslavement" under Russia. In Russian and Soviet historiography he was praised as the leading figure responsible for bringing about the ultimate "reunification" of Ukraine and Russia since the fall of Kyivan Rus'.³²

ii. *The Cossacks and Women*

The Cossack state was essentially military in nature. Ukrainians glorify the Cossacks' military achievements in particular, and their democratic and freedom loving characteristics as well. Yet, such a social-political organization did not give significant positions to women. Cossack women did not enjoy the same rights as men because social status was based upon military ability and fighting skills. In these areas women could neither match nor compete with the male Cossacks. Women were also prohibited access to the military and administrative headquarters. Their subordinate roles remained fixed.³³ Certainly women did not

³² Paul Magosci, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press) 1996, pp.216.

³³ Paul Magosci, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press) 1996,

have high social status in a military society like the Cossacks. The French traveler de Beauplan described Cossack women as open, active and energetic in seeking love and marriage with someone they love. He quoted the words of one Cossack woman "proposing" to a man, "you will know how to love your wife and govern her well...Your fine qualities lead me to beg you very humbly to accept me as your wife".³⁴ Nonetheless, Cossack women's "active participation" appears to have been limited to their search for spouses, and did not extend to political or other public affairs. Cossack women did appear to accept, to some extent, their subordinate position, as suggested by the previous quote.

Women were largely invisible in representations of the collective memories of the Cossacks. There is not a single woman depicted in the paintings of the Cossacks (refer to Figure 2 to Figure 4 in the Appendix). The national anthem of present-day Ukraine is itself gendered because Ukrainians are "brothers" of the Cossacks, but there is no place for sisters ("I will show we are brothers of the Cossack kin"). The visualized symbols and images of the Cossacks today are male leaders, male warriors, with arms and swords, and male drinkers of alcohol, as shown on current Ukrainian paintings, stamps and currency notes. None of these figures include females (please refer to Figure 2 to Figure 4 in the Appendix).

iii. The Impact of the Cossack Experience

Influenced by Romanticism, leading Ukrainian historians of the nineteenth century, such as Mykola Kostomarov and Mykhailo Maksymovych, generally regarded the Cossacks as the progenitors of the democratic and freedom loving ideals of the Ukrainians. Kostomarov claimed the Cossacks "loved neither tsar nor

pp.184.

³⁴ Guillaume Le Vasseur, Sieur de Beauplan, Andrew B. Pernal and Dennis F. Essar, (trans.), *A Description of Ukraine* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press) 1993, pp.70.

[Polish] lord ...Cossacks were all equal and free".³⁵ The first modern Ukrainian political organization, the Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood of the 1840s, published the *Books of the Genesis of the Ukrainian People* [*Knyhy Butiia Ukraïnskoho Narodu*]. In that Book, the Cossacks were regarded as the saviors of the Slavic world because of their democratic tradition, which contrasted with the authoritarian traditions of their neighbors.³⁶ While seeing Kyivan Rus' as Ukrainians' national creation, Hrushevskyi believed that the Cossacks embodied the best elements of national, cultural and social justice. He acknowledged the general Ukrainian perception of the Cossacks as progenitors of the Ukrainian national idea and consciousness.

Today, the ancient symbol, the trident [*tryzub*], adopted also by the Cossacks, is the national symbol. Some of the historical leaders of the Cossacks, like Bohdan Khmelnytskyi and Ivan Mazepa, are now on the currency of Ukraine (see Figure 1 to Figure 4 in the Appendix). They are remembered also in the national anthem: "I will show we are brothers of the Cossack kin" [*я покажем, що ми браття, козацького роду*]. Thus Cossack traditions are incorporated into the country's national traditions, and help to provide historical legitimacy. Cossack history is today understood to represent the proto-Ukrainian state. When Ukrainian male nation builders seek a role for women in nation building, they look at this historical past for sources of meaning and identity. The Cossack experience is the source that provides a positive male tradition for the male nation builders. At the same, it also constructs a negative tradition because there was no place for women in the military encampment in Cossack state.

³⁵ Paul Magosci, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press) 1996, pp.19.

³⁶ Frank Sysyn, "The Reemergence of the Ukrainian Nation and Cossack Mythology", *Social Research*, vol. 58 issue 4 (Winter 1991), pp.847-850.

The importance of the Cossacks in the hearts of Ukrainians derives not only from their excellence in military matters, but also from their love of freedom and democracy. However, the historian Linda Gordon has suggested that “the Cossack self-government was not democracy but dictatorship tempered by mob intervention”.³⁷ The Cossack experience may have been romanticized, idealized and probably exaggerated. Yet, their symbolic roles in the revival of Ukrainian national identity cannot be overlooked. Cossack symbolism, historical leaders, dressing style, and military prowess are important tropes of Ukrainian culture today.

IV. Nation Building in Post-Soviet Ukraine

i. The Needs of Building a Modern Ukrainian Nation

Ukraine is not a unified, homogenous country. On the contrary, Ukraine is a country of great cultural, economic, ethnic and historical diversity. Differences between western Ukraine and eastern Ukraine are apparent, as is other regional diversity.

According to Stephen Shulman, the structure of Ukrainian society is “bi-polar”. Industrial Eastern Ukraine is composed mostly of ethnic Russians or Russified Ukrainians who belong to the Eastern Orthodox Church. The inhabitants speak mainly Russian. The predominantly agricultural Western region is mainly comprised of ethnic Ukrainians of the Ukrainian-Greek-Catholic Church. They speak Ukrainian. The Eastern region has been greatly influenced by Russian, and later Soviet, culture. The Western region historically was under the rule of Poland

³⁷ Linda Gordon, *Cossack Rebellions: Social Turmoil in the Sixteen-Century Ukraine* (Albany: State University of New York Press) 1983, pp.83.

and later the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It is culturally close to these two cultures.

Region	Ethnic Majority	Religion	Cultural Association	Linguistic	Economic Development
Eastern	Russians, Russified Ukrainians	Orthodox	Russian & Soviet	Russian	Industrial
Western (<i>Halychyna</i> or Galicia)	Ukrainians	Ukrainian- Greek- Catholic	Polish & Austro- Hungarian	Ukrainian	Agricultural

Figure 1: Bi-polarity of Ukrainian Society: Comparison of the differences between the eastern and western Ukraine³⁸

Such differences became more apparent and potentially more explosive after independence in 1991. If Ukrainians could have their own nation, then why didn't other national minorities in Ukraine have the right to their own nation? This is particularly problematic because various groups of ethnic minorities live in Ukraine. The largest "minority" group is Russian (eleven million people, comprising 22% of the population), then Jews (0.9%), Poles (0.5%), Hungarians (0.3%), Germans, Finns, Tatars and other ethnic groups (0.5%).³⁹

Such ethnic question clearly posed a great threat to the young Ukraine. The most obvious force of separatism came from the eastern part of the country, where the majority of the Russians reside.

The heterogeneous nature of Ukraine (and the potential conflicts this presents) has stimulated the Ukrainian government to undertake the project of nation building. It is currently trying to build a Ukrainian nation with Ukrainian traditions

³⁸ Stephen Shulman, "The Cultural Foundations of Ukrainian National Identity", *Ethnic & Racial Studies*, vol. 22, (November 1999), pp. 1011-1036.

³⁹ According to 1989 census. *Natsional'nyi sklad naseleennia Ukraïny*, pt.1 (Kyiv) 1991, pp.4-6, quoted in Paul Magosci, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press) 1996, pp.9.

and values at the core. Ukrainian nationalism is being promoted as the central value of what it means to be a citizen of Ukraine. To build a nation, the Ukrainian government selects the elements needed. It emphasizes cultural revival, meaning the revival of Ukrainian culture, traditional values, historical memory, and myths. By doing so, it seeks to develop a force capable of holding the different ethnic groups of the country together.

Ukraine's internal diversity is further complicated by external affairs. Internationally, Ukrainian independence in 1991 was both unexpected. Ukraine's invisibility on the international stage was obvious. In 1992, a very limited number of western scholars, members of the mass media, and governments accepted that Ukraine was an independent and sovereign country. Some of them even viewed Ukraine as still a part of Russia. An embarrassing but somewhat telling incident involved the former Ukrainian president Kravchuk on a visit to Western Europe in the spring of 1992. A leader of another country asked Kravchuk, "Which part of Russia is Ukraine in?"⁴⁰ Kravchuk was embarrassed. This incident was indicative of Ukraine's invisibility on the international stage.

As a result of diversity at home and invisibility abroad, the Ukrainian government is actively engaged in the project of nation building.

ii. Nation Building As A Project

It is difficult, even problematic, to try to clearly define the meaning of nation building. This is because nation building is a long-term and changing process. Walker Connor has argued that the essence of the nation is "psychological" rather than "tangible", and it "progresses almost without visibility and awareness".⁴¹

⁴⁰ Quoted in Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation Building* (London: Routledge) 1998, pp. 200.

⁴¹ Walker Connor, "Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying?", *World Politics*, vol. XXIV, no. 3

Therefore, nation building is a gradual process that re-defines and re-creates certain elements that will encourage a loyalty and a shared consciousness, binding a previously heterogeneous population together. One of the most important tasks of nation building is the construction and re-construction of national identities.

a. National Identity

Roman Szorpluk argues that nation building in Ukraine is attempting to redefine Ukrainian identity. Taras Kuzio shares a similar view. He comments that the main theme of the Ukrainian nation building process is "the transfer of these identities to an exclusive loyalty to a modern political nation, a transfer which is partially dependent upon the socio-economic situation prevailing in Ukraine of identity".⁴²

Nation building here is a top-down movement initiated by the government of Ukraine to transform the identities of the residents of Ukraine. Formerly, residents might be loyal to the Soviet Union, the regions where they were born, or regions where they reside. The Ukrainian government aims at redirecting these loyalties to the Ukrainian central government and state. On the Fifth Anniversary of Ukrainian Independence, L. Kuchma discussed Ukraine's nation building, maintaining that it "will transform the *naselennia* [populace] into a *narod* [nation] and the territory into a state".⁴³

Changing the identity of a population is neither an easy nor quickly accomplished task. Indeed, it is a long term and complex process. Anthony Smith and Benedict Anderson believe that several key elements are needed to transform a *naselennia* into *narod*. These elements include a compact territorial unit of population, a common history among the population, a common culture, a single

(April 1972), pp.337, pp.350.

⁴² Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation Building* (London: Routledge) 1998, pp. 4.

⁴³ Uriadovyi Kurier, 29 August 1996 & Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation Building* (London: Routledge) 1998, pp. v.

economy, channels of social communication (especially mass printing), and common legal rights and duties.⁴⁴ Several elements contributing to national identity are discussed here. The revival of Ukrainian culture, the re-writing of history, and historiography, and the building of a collective memory are necessary elements to the re-definition of Ukrainian identity.

b. National History and Historiography

According to Kuchma, the re-interpretation and re-writing of national history forms an important part of the construction and reconstruction of national identity. He believes that Ukraine "needs to revive its genetic memory, a deep understanding of one's history" on the Fifth Anniversary of Ukrainian independence.⁴⁵ He continues the former president Leonid Kravchuk's project of historicizing Ukrainians' national identity by giving Ukrainians a national identity separate from Russians -- a separate national history and a unique national mythos.

The main theme of post-Soviet Ukrainian history is the country's continuous struggles for national liberation and an independent state. The Ukrainian navy newspaper comments that Ukrainian struggle for independence was "through the blood and sacrifices of thousands of Ukrainian patriots who gave up their lives for liberation".⁴⁶ The Defense Minister also offered a similar opinion, stating that Ukrainian independence is a result of "centuries of dreams and the self-sacrificing

⁴⁴ Anthony D. Smith, "Ethnic Identity and Territorial Nationalism in Comparative Perspective" in Alexander J. Motyl (ed.), *Thinking Theoretically About Soviet Nationalities. History and Comparison in the Study of the USSR* (New York: Columbia University Press) 1992, pp.49. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso) 1991, pp. 49.

⁴⁵ *Uriadovyi Kurier*, 29 August 1996 and Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation Building* (London: Routledge) 1998, pp. 201.

⁴⁶ *Flot Ukraïnyi*, 30 November 1996.

struggle of many generations of Ukrainian patriots".⁴⁷

Ukrainian national history and historiography are both based on Mykhailo Hrushevskyi's historical schema. Hrushevskyi himself plays a dual role in Ukrainian history. He is not only a prominent Ukrainian historian but also a national figure who symbolizes the devotion to an independent Ukraine and Ukrainian culture. He was officially nationalized as one of the three Ukrainian state builders on Ukraine's fifth anniversary of independence in 1996, together with Volodymyr the Great and Yaroslav the Wise.

According to Mykhailo Hrushevskyi's representation of Ukrainian history, the Ukrainian ethnic nation [*natsiia*] originated from an ethno-cultural group that has been enriched by a thousand-year history dating back to the great state of Kyivan Rus'. Yet, the aggression and exploitation of Russian imperialism, since the Treaty of Pereiaslav in 1654, consistently frustrated Ukrainian ambitions for statehood. As a result of these controversial interpretations of key historical events and figures, Ukrainian-Russian relations are depicted as unhappy and oppressive from the Ukrainian point of view.⁴⁸ The experience under the regime of the Soviet Union is thus seen as a continuation of Russian-centered cultural and economic colonialism. Therefore, Ukrainian independence in 1991 was depicted as the long-awaited fulfillment of the dream of democracy and freedom inherent in Ukrainian culture.

c. Mythical Structure of Ukrainian Nationhood

Based upon a somewhat simplified version of Hrushevskyi's historical schema, Ukrainian nationhood is built upon a set of myths stretching from the myth of foundation to the myth of suffering and colonialism. These myths need not be true

⁴⁷ Radio Ukraine World Service, 24 August 1996.

⁴⁸ Kataryna Wolczuk, "History, Europe and the "National Idea": the "Official" Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine, *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 28, no. 4 (2000), pp. 677.

to be both powerful and unquestioned, as Roland Barthes has noted.⁴⁹ They occupy a special position among citizens of a nation in the making.

Foundation Myth, Myth of a Golden Age and Myth of Descent

In the new post-Soviet Ukrainian historiography, Kyivan Rus' is regarded as the foundation of the Ukrainian nation, the first Ukrainian nation. This is the foundation myth of Ukrainian nationhood.

Kyivan Rus' is regarded as one of the greatest and most civilized states of the medieval period. Its' cultural, architectural, and literary achievements were extraordinary. It is for these reasons that the Kyivan state serves as a potent foundation myth of the golden age in Ukrainian nation building. After the invasion of the Mongols in 1240, 1416 and 1418, the great state weakened and never recovered its former glory. The first "Partition of Ukraine" began with the sack of Kyiv by the Mongols and then the state was divided among various princes.⁵⁰ Ukraine's national history continued with the rising of the Cossacks as a direct revival of the tradition of the Kyivan Rus'. The myth of descent is continued through the Cossack experience.⁵¹ Thus, a genealogical link is formed; Kyivan Rus' is regarded as the original Ukrainian state, the Cossack state as the revival, and Ukraine today is the final resurgence.

Myth of Aggression, Myth of Colonialism, Myth of Suffering and Myth of Empire

The myth of historical aggression and exploitation stretches from the Treaty of

⁴⁹ Roland Barthes, Annette Lavers (sel. & trans.), *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang) 1972, pp.127, 138..

⁵⁰ Andrew Wilson, *Ukrainian Nationalism in 1990s: A Minority Faith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1997, pp.3.

⁵¹ M.F. Kotliar, "Davnoruski poperednyky kozatstva" *Ukraïnsky istorychny zhurnal*, no. 12, (1990), pp. 12-29. See also Andrew Wilson, "National History and National Identity in Ukraine and Belarus" in Graham Smith (ed.), *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: the Politics of National Identities* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press) 1998, pp. 41.

the Pereiaslav to the Soviet Era. Instead of adhering to the "Little Russian" stereotype of the "voluntary" inclusion within the Russian Empire, the absorption is viewed as the beginning of the entire period of struggle for national liberation.⁵² The Romanov dynasty and the Soviet regime were both described as "empires" and thus Ukraine as their "internal colony", was subject to colonial exploitation and forced Russification.

Post-Soviet interpretations of Ukrainian experiences under the Soviet regime generally portray Ukrainians as victims, which differs greatly from the official interpretations before 1991. The Famine of 1932-1934, the victims of Stalin's repressions, and the tragedy of Chernobyl constitute much of the mythos of suffering and victimization. These three tragedies are used to illustrate the apathy of the Soviet regime to Ukraine SSR and to Ukrainians, who were merely regarded as a small and unimportant screw in the big machine of socialism.

It has, in fact, been shown by other scholars that the Russian Republic was a net exporter to and supporter of Ukraine SSR. Despite the fact that Ukrainian SSR was a major agricultural and industrial producer in the Soviet Union, it was also a net importer of cheap energy from Russia.⁵³ Nonetheless, these myths are important elements in Ukrainian nationhood. They are the supporting structures that uphold the whole long history of Ukraine's "national liberation" movement.

d. Revival of Ukrainian Culture

The revival of Ukrainian culture as a national culture is an obvious task. It is also an important part of the nation building project.

⁵² Andrew Wilson, "National History and Identity in Ukraine and Belarus", in Graham Smith (ed.), *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: the Politics of National Identities* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press) 1998, pp. 41.

⁵³ Martha Brill Olcott, Anders Aslund, and Sherman W. Garnett (ed.), *Getting It Wrong: Regional Cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) 1999, pp. 52-57.

Ukrainian culture had previously been considered merely local or rural during the Soviet regime. Ukrainian language, for example, was considered to be only a dialect of Russian, a local language spoken by local folks. Ukrainian culture was viewed as a peasant folk culture inferior to Russian high culture. Ukrainians were Little Russians. This situation changed after 1991. Ukrainian culture is no longer marginalized. It has been elevated to a national culture and the dominant culture of the Ukrainian nation. Ukrainian language is now the official language, as confirmed by the Constitution of 1996. This has created problems given the fact that the Russian language has been commonly used by the many Russians in Ukraine, Russified Ukrainians, and other Ukrainians because of the intense Russification process during the nineteenth and the twentieth century.

It is worth noting that the current teaching of Ukrainian language focuses on distinguishing between Ukrainian and Russian words, including identifying the origins of different words as either "Ukrainian" or "Russian".⁵⁴ The differentiation of Ukrainian culture from Russian culture is a primary aim.

e. Collective Memory

Scholars believe that collective memory is a central component of national identity. The loss of collective memory devastates national consciousness. Anthony Smith believes that memory is very crucial in making-up national identity. He adds that "one might almost say: no memory, no identity, no identity, no nation".⁵⁵ The nation is built upon common memories of sufferings, glories, and most of all, sacrifices, a notion reflected in the words of the Defense Minister of Ukraine above.

⁵⁴ This was my experience at Harvard Summer School while I was studying Ukrainian. Whenever the instructor taught a new word, the stress was whether the word comes from Russian or Ukrainian.

⁵⁵ Anthony D. Smith, "Memory and Modernity: Reflections on Ernest Gellner's Theory of Nationalism", *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 2, part 3 (November 1996), pp.383.

Smith also comments that in regard to battles, defeats are no less important than victories for “mobilizing and unifying ethnies and nations”.⁵⁶ Building and re-creating collective memories is obviously an important and critical task for elites in post-Soviet Ukraine.⁵⁷ Collective memories are important and vital to Ukraine and Ukrainians. This can be illustrated by the fact that the Russian Empress Catherine ordered that historical memories of the period of the hetmans be erased in 1764 when she abolished the hetmanate in order to transform the identities of hetmans into Little Russians.⁵⁸

Post-Soviet Ukraine’s re-creation of collective memory depends upon the central imagery of victimization of Ukraine under the regimes of Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union. The shared memories of sufferings are expressed in various re-interpretations of historical events. The main cause of Ukrainian sufferings and unhappiness was Russia’s imperialism and the Soviet Union’s forced socialism, which not only enslaved the Ukrainian people but also destroyed their freedom-loving tradition. The Treaty of Pereiaslav of 1654 turned Ukraine into a colony of Imperial Russia. Ukraine and Ukrainians suffered from economic exploitation, political oppression, cultural discrimination and Russification since that time. The coming of Communism to Ukraine was also forced and illegal.

The “socialist choice” of the people of Ukraine was historically illegal [nepravomirnyi]. Who knows the history of 1917-1920 realizes that we had the Ukrainian National Republic [*Ukrainska Narodna Respublyka*] and West Ukrainian National Republic [*Zakhidno-Ukrainska Narodna*

⁵⁶ Anthony D. Smith, “Memory and Modernity: Reflections on Ernest Gellner’s Theory of Nationalism”, *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 2, part 3 (November 1996), pp.381.

⁵⁷ Igor Torbakov, “Historiography and Modern Nation-Building”, *Transition*, vol. 2, no.18 (6 September 1996), pp.11.

⁵⁸ Stephen Velychenko, *National History as Cultural Process* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies) 1992, pp.131. Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation Building* (London: Routledge) 1998, pp.202.

Respublyka]...This was the choice of our people. After this there was only annexation and aggression.⁵⁹

The Famine of 1933 in Ukraine was the most obvious expression of suffering and exploitation. The Famine was, in fact, a great tragedy to Ukraine and Ukrainians in terms of human loss. It is estimated that the Great Famine of 1933 cost four and a half million to five million human lives in 1933 alone, while the death toll might rise to ten million for the rest of the 1930s.⁶⁰ A witness who was sent to Ukraine to help implement collectivization described the devastation there.

There was no grain to eat...No bread...They [the Soviet officials] had taken every last kernel of grain from the village. There was no seed to be sown for spring wheat or other spring grains. The entire seed fund had been confiscated...There was no help. The party officials had one answer to all entreaties: You should work harder; you shouldn't have loafed...⁶¹

In post-Soviet Ukraine, history textbooks emphasize Ukrainian sufferings. The apathy of the Communist Party and the Soviet officials are seriously condemned as the main cause of the Famine.⁶² The sufferings were also commemorated in stamps to remind the people of Ukraine that their great-grandfather, great-grandmothers, grandfathers, grandmothers, fathers, mothers, relatives, and friends might have suffered from the Great Famine. It is a critical part of the collective memory.

⁵⁹ *Biuletyn Verkhovnoi Rady Ukraïny*, no. 51, (1991), pp.55. Quoted in Kataryna Wolczuk, "History, Europe and the "National Idea": the "Official" Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine, *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 28, no. 4 (2000), pp.678.

⁶⁰ Wasyl Hryshko, Marco Carynnyk (trans.), *The Ukrainian Holocaust of 1933* (Toronto: Bahriany Foundation) c1983, pp.92. Quoted in Paul Magosci, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press) 1996, pp. 559.

⁶¹ Wasyl Hryshko, Marco Carynnyk (trans.), *The Ukrainian Holocaust of 1933* (Toronto: Bahriany Foundation) c1983, pp.92-96. Quoted in Paul Magosci, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press) 1996, pp. 561.

⁶² Catherine Wanner, *The Burden of Dreams: Post-Soviet National Identity in Ukraine* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press), 1998, pp. 94-95.

Another part of the collective memory is the Chernobyl tragedy. The Chernobyl disaster still haunts the people of Ukraine and indeed the world. It is estimated that about three million people were affected. Nonetheless, the Chernobyl accident is not openly condemned in history textbooks as is the Great Famine. This was largely because the nuclear power generated by the Chernobyl plant is still required to light Kyiv and other cities in Ukraine. Although the Ukrainian government promised to close Chernobyl by December 2000, and did so, the nuclear plant still served as a cheap source of electricity after the establishment of the Ukrainian state. Therefore, the accident is just mentioned in textbooks with a few comments on the causes.⁶³

V. Conclusion

Given the fact that Ukraine had never had its own state, independence in 1991 was indeed historic to many Ukrainians. However, as independent Ukraine is “diverse at home and invisible abroad”, the Ukrainian government has been compelled to launch the nation building project. This project is aimed at transforming the national identities of its heterogeneous citizens into a *Ukrainian national identity* capable of holding the nation together. Yet, transformation of identities is not an easy or over-night task. It requires the rewriting of national history, the revival of Ukrainian culture as the national culture, and the building of collective memory. These elements may, in time, help construct a unified identity.

Gender is not openly visible in all these elements. Nevertheless, the idealization of the Cossack experience as foundational to the national context of the present day is indeed deeply gendered, as illustrated above.

⁶³ Catherine Wanner, *The Burden of Dreams: Post-Soviet National Identity in Ukraine* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press) 1998, pp. 98-101.

Chapter 3: Gender, Nation and the cult of Berehynia

I. Introduction

Ukrainian nationalism has been a crucial factor in the making of government policy because the Ukrainian government is consciously and actively cultivating it with the aim of holding the heterogeneous country together and turning it into a unified and harmonious nation state. Frequently, the project is presented as being in the interests of all the people in Ukraine, and therefore all should participate in it. Nonetheless, the interests of women are frequently ignored, and their positions and their roles within the nation are defined by the male leaders of the project. Any "Ukrainian nation" that does not consider the interests of women, who make up slightly more than half of the Ukrainian population, will be incomplete and restricted.

In this chapter, I seek to engender the project of nation building in Ukraine by analyzing how the Ukrainian leaders define the roles of men and women, as well as how they depict the contributions of women to the national project. In fact, men and women in Ukraine are placed differently in the so-called *national* (but indeed a *male-oriented* and *male-defined*) project. In this nation-building project, contributions and responsibilities are allocated according to gender. Moreover, the interests and needs of men and women are weighted and valued differently and thus addressed in different ways, and perhaps, most importantly, at different times. A frequent theme of the Ukrainian leaders is that women's liberation must be delayed because the nation must first be fully liberated.

The contemporary appeals made to Ukrainian women to subordinate their interests and needs to the goals of national struggle are not new. They echo similar appeals in the late nineteenth century in Galicia where feminism first emerged.

Feminism did not develop independently. Rather it emerged and developed in the shadow of a suppressed national movement for autonomy and independence. Thus, the first section of this chapter will explore this early encounter of nationalism and feminism in Ukraine. This encounter significantly shaped the evolution of feminism in Ukraine. In the late nineteenth century, as in the twenty-first, Ukrainian women were urged to subordinate their interests and needs to the national cause. In the past, as in the present, women responded to the call.

The second section of this chapter focuses on the revitalized present goal of building a *modern Ukrainian nation*. Today, Ukraine is an independent country. Nonetheless, Ukrainian women are still being asked to put aside their personal desires for the nation building project.

Central to Ukrainian nation builders' conception of the "Ukrainian woman" is the ancient Slav pagan goddess *Berehynia*. Her characteristics are idealized and redefined to fit into the context of the current Ukrainian nation building project. She has become the model for Ukrainian women. Today, she appears in various forms of art, and in both popular culture and high culture, in order to appeal to Ukrainian women of different backgrounds. *Berehynia* is now used to represent far more than she did originally. Therefore, in the third section of this chapter I examine the historical roots and original meanings of this goddess.

The cult of *Berehynia* became overwhelming popular after a Ukrainian ethnographer, Vasyl Skurativskyi, published *Berehynia* in 1988. The book is responsible for the revival of this cult. Therefore, in the fourth section, I aim to explore the two main ideas of the book and its link to the revival of the cult of *Berehynia*.

Originally, *Berehynia* was the goddess of fertility and protection. Now, she is bearing far more than her original duties. Today, she is praised by Ukrainians for

her appreciation of Ukrainian culture, her active role in the preservation and the transmitting of Ukrainian language, her devotion to domesticity and child nurturing, and her role as the ideal hearth mother. Thus, the fifth section investigates the emphases and redefinitions of the roles and characteristics of Berehynia and how they fit into the context of the Ukrainian nation-building project. In other words, this section examines how these roles and characteristics are redefined to accommodate the present needs.

The last section of this chapter analyzes Ukrainian women's gendered national duties. Women are urged to produce more children and to nurture children with Ukrainian culture and traditional values for the nation. This section also explores men's national duties. While motherhood defines women's national duties, leadership and decision making are men's duties in the nation building project. Part of men's role is then to decide and define national gender roles.

II. Feminism and Nationalism: Historical Acquaintance

Feminism¹ did not develop independently in Ukraine. It has served the national cause since the nineteenth century, when discussions of women's interests and women's rights first emerged in Galicia (part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at that time). The totalizing effect of nationalism and the "need" to struggle for independence influenced the discourse on gender and women's issues. They were deemed less important than the overall national project, and thus were not prioritized.

In her book *Feminists Despite Themselves*, Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak

¹ There is no single definition of the term Feminism. Here, I adopt the generalized definition Chomiak uses in her book, as referring it to women's emancipation, women's rights, and equality between sexes in both public and private spheres.

argues that when female activists in Galicia formed their own organizations to advocate the emancipation of women in the late nineteenth century, they indeed worked for the sake of the nation. Implicitly, their ultimate goal was to help in expelling foreign rule in Ukraine and to establish a Ukrainian state. These women's organizations focused on work promoting education and charitable jobs for the weak and the poor. Thus, these female activists defined the nature of their work as a self-help movement working for the well-being of the community. The majority of women involved regarded their ultimate task as assisting in the national struggle.² One common and widely accepted idea was that women could not be liberated until the nation was liberated. Women's goals were subordinated "to those of the nation or the prevalent ideology".³

Natalia Kobrynska, a prominent female Ukrainian activist, opposed the subordination of women's interests and promoted the public roles of women. Despite her efforts, her ideas were not accepted by men or by women. Feminist consciousness was weak among even the majority of female intellectuals of the time.⁴ To men, feminist activism and their advocacy challenged men's superiority. From that time onward, they opposed the feminist movement, and indeed a hatred of feminism and the feminist movement was common to most men. Feminist demands found equally little support from women.⁵ Lesia Ukrainka (1871-1913), the best-known Ukrainian female activist, is largely praised by Ukrainians not

² Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, *Feminists Despite Themselves: Women in Ukrainian Community Life, 1884-1939* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta) 1988, pp. xix.

³ Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, *Feminists Despite Themselves: Women in Ukrainian Community Life, 1884-1939* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta) 1988, pp. xx-xxi, pp. xix.

⁴ Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, *Feminists Despite Themselves: Women in Ukrainian Community Life, 1884-1939* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta) 1988, pp. 71-85.

⁵ Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, *Feminists Despite Themselves: Women in Ukrainian Community Life, 1884-1939* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta) 1988, pp. 37.

because she was a female writer, but because of her active engagement in the Ukrainian struggle for independence. There was no market for feminism. There was only one for nationalism.

The historical background of the relationship between nationalism and feminism illustrates certain important concepts. First, these two ideas weighed differently among Ukrainians; nationalism was ranked first while feminism was ranked far below. In addition, feminism served a common national cause. The over-arching effect of nationalism, a phenomenon also illustrated in the experience of modern Indian nationalism, can be seen clearly here. Second, feminism and the feminist movement were instrumental to the national cause. The charitable works these female activists engaged in also served certain functions for nationalism. Ukrainian female activists did not see the need for an independent women's movement, for they too believed that women could not be liberated if the country was not liberated first. The priority was clear. Unfortunately, national liberation does not guarantee the liberation of women.

In fact, only a small number of women were aware of the Ukrainian national movement and an even smaller number participated in this movement in Galicia. This was primarily because few women were educated, and also because the Ukrainian national movement in the nineteenth century was a movement initiated and supported by male intellectual and elites.⁶

The National-populist society Prosvita was formed in 1868. Its formation benefited from the informal autonomy that was granted to ethnic minorities as a result of the reconstruction policy of the Hapsburg Empire. Yet, the power to

⁶ John-Paul Himka, *Galician Villages and the Ukrainian National Movement in the Nineteenth Century*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press in association with the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta) 1988, pp. xxii.

exercise this informal autonomy was granted to various nobles of the Magyars, Poles, and Ukrainians. Ukrainians were the most disadvantaged in this regard, because Ukrainians were part of the Polish section and thus Polish nobles dominated all institutions that grew out of this informal autonomy. Despite such difficulties, Ukrainians did form Prosvita which started to publish a newspaper called *Batkivshchyna* in 1879. The name was a Ukrainian word meaning "patrimony" and "fatherland".⁷ Obviously, the national movement had a gender.

In order to foster literacy among peasants, the Prosvita established reading clubs with a national orientation in Galicia. Members of reading clubs were of various backgrounds. Among them were priests, teachers, writers, and cantors. Intellectual women and girls were also members of these readings clubs with an overwhelming proportion being young girls. Yet, the total number of women was very limited, largely due to the traditional stereotypes of women in the minds of Ukrainian men. Traditionally, Ukrainian men considered women as intellectually inferior. An old Ukrainian proverb described women having long hair but short intellects.⁸ Women were second-class citizens in an agricultural society such as in Galicia; they also remained second-class members in the reading clubs. The hostility of national populists reflected the "sexism of Galician Ukrainian intelligentsia".⁹ Only men had the franchise in national matters; women were largely excluded.

⁷ John-Paul Himka, *Galician Villages and the Ukrainian National Movement in the Nineteenth Century*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press in association with the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta) 1988, pp.69.

⁸ John-Paul Himka, *Galician Villages and the Ukrainian National Movement in the Nineteenth Century*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press in association with the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta) 1988, pp. 101.

⁹ John-Paul Himka, *Galician Villages and the Ukrainian National Movement in the Nineteenth Century*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press in association with the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta) 1988, pp. 102.

III. Revitalized Present Goal

Now Ukraine is an independent and sovereign country; the long hoped for goal of independence has been achieved. Women should be able to liberate themselves because the country is already liberated. In post-Soviet Ukraine, however, this is not the case. The priority given to "nation" over "women" continues to exist and is even being intensified and revitalized. Present efforts are concentrated on the ongoing project of constructing a *modern Ukrainian nation*. Once again, Ukrainian women are being asked to serve the national cause. Women's interests are totally subsumed and subordinated to this project. Women's issues remain secondary and unimportant. Ironically, women cannot yet liberate themselves even though the country has been liberated. Very often, women's interests are the first to be ignored if sacrifices and concessions must be made. The term "feminism" remains suspect in the minds of most Ukrainian women and men today¹⁰ just as it was a century ago. Moreover, feminism is now associated with the West and Western values. The argument is that Ukraine must recover its traditions and traditional values. Therefore, for Ukrainians, feminism offers nothing constructive and is certain to contaminate "pure" Ukrainian values.¹¹

Ironically, such prioritizing and thinking is common even among the leaders of Ukrainian women's organizations. Oksana Sapeliak, the president of the Lviv branch of the Ukrainian Women's Union, an independent women's organization, said on the eve of independence that women would have to liberate the nation before they could liberate themselves.¹² The national president of the same

¹⁰ Sincere thanks to the author. Marian Rubchak, "Women's Issues in Ukraine: Past and Present", unpublished, pp. 3

¹¹ Solomea Pavlychko, "Between Feminism and Nationalism", in Mary Buckley (ed.), *Perestroika and Soviet Women* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press) 1992, pp. 82-90.

¹² *Ukraïnka*, 3 (30) 1995, pp.3. Quoted in Marian Rubchak, "Women's Issues in Ukraine.

organization, Atena Pashko, commented, "the fate of Ukraine is inseparable from the fate of women". The Union further defines the roles of women in its Statute:

For centuries a Ukrainian woman was the guardian (*Berehynia*) of the home hearth, took care of the customs of the ancestors, national language, morality, ethnos, education, and culture, and participated in the struggle for the high ideals of Ukrainian statehood.¹³

The main aim of the organization is to promote the national consciousness and spirituality of women in Ukraine¹⁴. Atena Pashko also has referred to Ukrainian women as the "guardians of the family hearth...Berehynia".¹⁵

In analyzing pronouncements about the revitalized goals of the present day—building a *modern Ukrainian nation*, I find the constant appearance and promotion of the ancient Slav goddess, Berehynia. The Ukrainian government promotes many of the attributes adhering to this mythical woman when it redefines the national duties of its female citizens. Very often, Berehynia's *imagined* characteristics at home and her *imagined* attitudes towards Ukrainian culture dominate the discourse. This campaign has been successful, as the cult of Berehynia is increasingly popular among women and is becoming accepted as manifesting the necessary characteristics of a Ukrainian woman. Berehynia is very appealing.

Past and Present", unpublished, pp. 3. Sincere thanks to the author.

¹³ Solomea Pavlychko, "Between Feminism and Nationalism", in Mary Buckley (ed.), *Perestroika and Soviet Women* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press) 1992, pp. 91.

¹⁴ Solomea Pavlychko, "Between Feminism and Nationalism", in Mary Buckley (ed.), *Perestroika and Soviet Women* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press) 1992, pp. 91.

¹⁵ *Ukraïinka*, 2 (26) 1994, pp.4. Quoted in Marian Rubchak, "Women's Issues in Ukraine. Past and Present", unpublished, pp. 3. Sincere thanks to the author.

IV. Berehynia: *The Perfect Ukrainian Woman*

i. *History*

Berehynia was a Slav pagan goddess who was worshipped for centuries. The first known historical record of the worship of Berehynia appears in the work of the Byzantine historian Procopius in the sixth century. He described Slavs' worship of trees, lakes and riverbanks called "Beregina".¹⁶ According to both Joanna Hubbs¹⁷ and Martha Ann, "Bereginy" are, "fertility and hunting goddesses" and "nymphs of rivers, lakes and forests. Portrayed as half woman, half bird or half fish".¹⁸ Other evidence shows that she was worshipped before and even after the coming of Christianity in the late tenth century in Kyivan Rus'.

Historically, materials indicate that the popular cult of protectress was widespread. Images of Berehynia can be found in ancient stones and ceramic figurines, metal and later in ritual towels in folk arts.¹⁹ Jewelry of the sixth century shows Berehynia listening to snakes or sometimes holding them. Snakes were protective forces, believed to assist in births and were highly valued. They were also bearers of good fortune. Berehynia is also associated with rusalki ("rusalky" in Ukrainian) who are female creatures, water spirits, and insurers of female fertility.²⁰ In Ukrainian, Berehynia's name comes from the word "berehty" meaning to "protect". Therefore, Berehynia represents two notions: fertility and protection.

Berehynia became the major fertility goddess (see Figure 5 and Figure 6 in the

¹⁶ Procopius, H. B. Dewing (trans.), *History of Wars* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press) 1924, vol. 4, pp. 270-271.

¹⁷ Joanna Hubbs, *Mother Russia: the Feminine Myth in Russian Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press) 1988, pp. 16.

¹⁸ Martha Ann, Dorothy Myers Imel, *Goddesses in World Mythology* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO) 1993, pp.44.

¹⁹ E.J.W. Barber, "On the Origins of vily/rusalki". *Varia on the Indo-European Past: Papers in Memory of Marija Gimbuta, Journal of Indo-European Studies*, monograph 19 (1997), pp. 21.

²⁰ E.J.W. Barber, "On the Origins of vily/rusalki". *Varia on the Indo-European Past: Papers in Memory of Marija Gimbuta, Journal of Indo-European Studies*, monograph 19 (1997), pp. 6.

Appendix) in the eighth century. After the coming of Christianity in 988, Berehynia was allowed to remain as an agricultural symbol and thus she continued to exist in Ukrainian culture.

ii. Development

Berehynia has been a consistent figure throughout the history of the Ukrainians. She has remained one of the major goddesses. Collections of peasant folk costumes in various museums in Russia and Ukraine show that Berehynia is the center of these collections. Berehynia remains an essential religious figure to many families in Ukraine's rural areas. Research shows that the images of Berehynia are found on handmade embroideries, vests, and women's folk costumes in many households in Kyiv, Lviv and other areas (see Figure 5 to Figure 7 in the Appendix).²¹

iii. Revival

Today, Berehynia symbolizes the clichéd traditional roles of women in the family as wives and mothers. She appears as the idealized figure guiding Ukrainian women to recognize and accept their proper gender roles. She is the perfect Ukrainian woman and the example Ukrainian women are urged to follow.

The cult of Berehynia became overwhelming popular after the publication of the book *Berehynia* by Ukrainian ethnographer Vasyl Skurativskyi in 1987.²² Vasyl Skurativskyi specializes in Ukrainian ethnographic research. He was educated at Kyiv University and worked as a journalist in a district newspaper. Skurativskyi has authored various ethnographic books and has edited some journals including the book *Berehynia* and the journal of the same title.

²¹ Mary B. Kelly, *Goddess Embroideries of Eastern Europe* (New York: Studiobooks) 1996, pp. 8.

²² Vasyl Skurativskyi, *Berehynia* (Kyiv: Radianskyi Pysmennyk) 1987.

In *Berehynia*, Skurativskyi describes Ukrainian folk culture and peasant traditions. He also gives various colorful illustrations of rural life: peasant houses, rural crafts, traditional towels and pillow with embroidery, and folk costumes. He appreciates rural life and urges people not only to preserve it but also to follow its customs and traditions. He presents two main ideas in his book. Firstly, it is necessary to preserve and restore Ukrainian folk and peasant culture. The peasant family's hierarchical structure, which is essentially patriarchal, must be revived. Ukrainian matriarchy is insignificant. Secondly, cultural values must be transmitted from generation to generation. All these ideas are closely associated with the author's understanding of Berehynia, the ancient pagan goddess.

As a Ukrainian ethnographer interested in Ukraine's ethnographic research, Skurativskyi focuses on Ukraine's lost peasant culture. His main aim is to recall the folk culture and to urge people to preserve it, because he believes that Ukrainian traditional peasant culture has been lost under the regime of the Soviet Union during which industrialization was the main theme. Moreover, as a result of urbanization, many people moved to urban cities from villages and left behind their peasant cultural values. Therefore, Skurativskyi aims at awakening the Ukrainian people who have already forgotten the Ukrainian peasant culture. He comments that the majority of village women are mothers, and yet they have lost their consciousness [to folk culture] in their manual labor work.²³ He also condemns the modern Ukrainian women who do not even know how to sing traditional Ukrainian folk songs or how to make embroidery. He also disapproves of the shift in women's domestic duties due to work in industry. Therefore, it is his aim to recall the duties and responsibilities of women and mothers.²⁴ According to the author, Berehynia

²³ Vasyl Skurativskyi, *Berehynia* (Kyiv: Radianskyi Pysmennyk) 1987, pp. 3.

²⁴ Vasyl Skurativskyi, *Berehynia* (Kyiv: Radianskyi Pysmennyk) 1987, pp. 3.

exemplifies the best of folk culture and traditional values. She remains the center of both hearth and home.

a. Peasant Hierarchical Family Structure

The peasant family is patriarchal and hierarchal in nature. Obedience is another main theme that emerges when Skurativskyi analyzes the peasant family structure. Yet, obedience is structured according to age and gender -- children should obey parents, and wives are subordinate to their husbands.

Peasant women in his book appear to be mostly obedient, submissive, loving, and caring. Their naturalized subordination to men is also shown in pictures. For example, Figure 9 in the Appendix shows the cover of this book. The peasant woman appears obedient, loving, beautiful, and feminine (see Figure 8 and Figure 9 in the Appendix). The apples in her hands symbolize her care for family and fertility. She is also dressed in traditional folk costume, illustrating her love for traditional values.²⁵ Furthermore, other peasant women show their appreciation towards the hierarchy in family as well as to the folk culture. The author thus affirms not only the domestic nature of women's roles, as exemplified by Berehynia, but also the subordination of women at home. The book talks about the revival of folk culture and the family patriarchal hierarchy. The promotion of folk culture implicitly calls for the return of the subordination of women, including a return to domesticity.

b. Generation Fires

The transfer of cultural values and traditions from generations to generations is definitely a main theme in Skurativskyi's book. Women play a vital role in the transfer of these values. Usually, these values would be passed from mothers to

²⁵ Vasyl Skurativskyi, *Berehynia* (Kyiv: Radianskyi Pysmennyk) 1987, cover.

daughters and grandmothers to granddaughters, so that generational fires could be maintained and traditional cultural values could be preserved. Interestingly, the author also shows pictures of grandmothers, daughters and granddaughters in one picture suggesting the transmission of traditional values, the precious cultural lore being passed from one generation to another (see Figure 10 in the Appendix).²⁶

iv. Emphases and Redefinitions

Currently, Berehynia is a popular traditional figure occupying places in various forms of arts designed to appeal to both those interested in popular culture and high culture. She was Christianized and thus, she is able to remain in Ukrainian culture.

High culture representations include the work of the poet Vasyl Ruban, who has published his romantic poem *Berehynia: An Historical Novel*. Her story and characteristics are praised in literature, texts, and poems, including Ruban's romantic poems published in 1992.²⁷ Vasyl Skurativskyi also established a monthly journal called *Berehynia* in 1992. The journal has drawn a great variety of papers and articles contributed by university scholars, writers, historians, and cartographers. Articles in the series of journal are related to Ukraine's history, map drawings and definitions, folk culture, literature and more. His goal is to draw attention from people of various walks of life. Moreover, *Berehynia* appears in Ukrainian folk theatre, and is part of the name one of Ukraine's most prestigious colleges.

In regard to popular culture, Berehynia's images appear on pysanky,²⁸ the

²⁶ Solomea Pavlychko, "Between Feminism and Nationalism", in Mary Buckley (ed.), *Perestroika and Soviet Women* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press) 1992, pp. 82-90.

²⁷ Vasyl Ruban, *Berehynia: istorychnyi roman* (Kyiv:Ukrainskyj Pysmennyk) 1992.

²⁸ Pysankarstvo is a type of Ukrainian folk art meaning painting on eggs. See http://www.artukraine.com/egg/pysanky_fam.htm and

Ukrainian Easter eggs. Her images are painted on textiles and tapestries (see Figure 11 in the Appendix). Her name titles music festivals, folk festivals, radio programs, and a women organization.²⁹ She appears in sculptures representing a caring and nurturing mother who protects her children from all sorts of harm.³⁰ Berehynia is glorified and celebrated on the eighth of September.³¹ She is also standing far above the ground in the main street of Lviv.³² Berehynia has become a powerful symbol carrying and transmitting messages and a deeply gendered national ideology. She is the ideal mother, the perfect Ukrainian woman, and the ultimate ambition of all Ukrainian women.

Berehynia is now used for far more than what she originally represented. She is *idealized, nationalized and reconfigured* to fit the context of the modern Ukrainian nation building. Several associations with this goddess and various characters are derived from the origin. She represents particular nationalized duties appealing to Ukrainian women.

a. Fertility

The old association of Berehynia with fertility is now particularly stressed. Figure 9 in the Appendix shows a woman who is holding apples, which are associated with fertility. Given the fact that post-Soviet Ukraine has experienced a sharp fall in fertility and depopulation (please refer to chapter four for details), the government of Ukraine wants women to produce more children. Berehynia thus fits

<http://www.artukraine.com/egg/pysankyp1.htm>.

²⁹ Taisa Kosenko, *Berehynia Ukrainy. Za Materialamy radio prohramy dlia zhinok 'Berehyni' Keiva shcho zvuchaly v efiri 'mystetstvo' protiahom 1991-1994 rokiv* (Kyiv: Mystetstvo) 1995.

³⁰ Children of Chernobyl Relief Fund Newsletter, vol. xvi, summer 1999, p. 1. A bronze sculpture of the "Berehynia" (the protectress) was presented to Hillary Rodham Clinton by the Fund which depicts "a traditional icon-like image of a mother holding a child with outstretched arms". See also <http://www.childrenofchornobyl.org/hrclinton.htm>.

³¹ September 8th also celebrates the Sports Day and the Nativity of Mary. See <http://www.nas.com/jpcolbertart/seasons/septdays1.html#sports>.

³² The *Den*, www.day.kiev.ua/DIGEST/2001/31/sport/sp1.htm

neatly into the clichéd belief that women are the nation's live givers and creators, and serves contemporary national needs. Apart from just giving birth, Ukrainian women are also urged to teach and nurture their offspring with Ukrainian culture. This means that they have not only to be mothers, but also have to be good reproducers of the national culture. Both kinds of reproduction are supported by powerful Berehynia imagery.

b. Guardian/Protectress

Berehynia means protectress or guardian. She is now not only protecting fertility and the domestic hearth, but also guarding Ukrainian culture, traditional values, language and the Ukrainian nation. Essentially, she is shielding pure Ukrainian values from the "contaminating" effects of Western values. Certainly, such a "protectress" role has several implications. As Ukraine is actively reviving its culture, it is important for these cultural values to be accepted by the common Ukrainian people. Nonetheless, the import of Western values is increasing, and having an impact on many Ukrainian people, particularly young people.³³ Therefore, it is in the interest of the Ukrainian government to act antagonistically towards the coming of Western values.

V. Gendered National Duties

The government of Ukraine enthusiastically pushes the cult of Berehynia and her characteristics as an ideal mother, a protectress, and a responsible citizen who loves Ukrainian language, culture and traditional values. On various occasions, officers of the government urge women to adopt Berehynia's characteristics

³³ See Solomea Pavlychko, "Progress on Hold: the Conservative Faces of Ukrainian Women", in Mary Buckley (ed.), *Post-Soviet Women: From Baltic to Central Asia* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press) 1997, pp. 219-234.

because building the nation requires women to model themselves on Berehynia.

On 6th March 1999, the newspaper *Holos Ukrainy* [Voice of Ukraine] published two greetings on 8th March from two important male politicians. Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma greeted women as Berehyni: "To Berehyni of our people. Greetings Ukrainian women on 8th March". The Speaker for the House, Oleksandr Tkchenko addressed women as, "Women-mother, Women-wife, Berehynia of our people".³⁴

Berehynia, the central image of women in Ukrainian mythology, represents the ideal mother and the spirit of the Ukrainian home—the perfect Ukrainian woman. She plays an essential role in preserving national history, identity and language. Now Berehynia has been appreciated as a model for Ukrainian women—"allegedly pure, maternal and self-sacrificial".³⁵ She has been the "protectress of the nation, guardian of the domestic hearth and the generational fire, and the image of women's domesticity".³⁶ Berehynia has been the "protectress" for Ukrainians since antiquity.

Katernya Motrych, a female journalist and author in Ukraine, published an article in *Zhinka* [Жінка/Women] in January 1992, entitled "To you women who stand next to the cradle of the nation, my message". In the article she discussed various issues related to women. She first discussed women's victimization during the Soviet era. They were "forced" to work and thus bore a "double burden" at home and at work. Such victimization has an echo effect on the building and recalling of the collective memories discussed in chapter two. Then she turned to

³⁴ "To Berehyni of Our People. Greetings Ukrainian Women on 8th March", *Holos Ukrainy* [Voice of Ukraine], 6th March 1999.

³⁵ Solomea Pavlychko, "Feminism in Post-Communist Ukrainian Society," in Rosalind Marsh (ed.), *Women in Russia and Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1996, pp.305-314.

³⁶ Marian J. Rubchak, "Christian virgin or pagan goddess", in Rosalind Marsh (ed.), *Women in Russia and Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1998, pp. 316-320.

the model of Berehynia, announcing:

The Ukrainian woman has a responsible mission. Like the Blessed Virgin, the Ukrainian woman must give birth to the Ukrainian Savior... And it is up to us all to create the conditions within which she can once be herself, the Berehynia [pagan-goddess] of the nation. In a free and democratic Ukraine, the first thing that we must do is to liberate women from heavy and debilitating work, and provide the means that will enable them to devote themselves to child-rearing for the first seven years of the child's life...The salvation of our nation is-Women. The Mother, and the grandmother of the human race.... To her we must return her sacred mission, encompassing that of the Blessed virgin and the Berehynia.³⁷

Women as "saviors of the nation" certainly is not a new idea. It was inherited from the Soviet era. Today, women in Ukraine are also the saviors of the nation by concentrating their energy on their children and their home. The clichéd duties of women continue to be confined to motherhood and domesticity. Nevertheless, the role of women as the creators and life-givers of the nation is also part of Ukrainian culture. Thus, Motrych aimed at merging the new duties Berehynia exemplifies with traditional Ukrainian culture.

i. Women's National Duties

Although the united and ultimate goal is to build a *modern Ukrainian nation*; there are in fact separate national goals for women and men.

For women, national duties are two-fold. Motherhood limits women to domesticity (private sphere). Ukrainian women are the hearth mothers, solely responsible for nurturing children, and carrying and transmitting traditional Ukrainian folk cultural values from generation to generation. Publicly, women are

³⁷ Kateryna Motrych, "To You Women Who Stand Next to the Cradle of the Nation, My Message" in *Zhinka*, (January 1992), pp.15.

depicted as the “mother of the nation” and thus they are still mothers. Little reference is given to their personality and individual characteristics. Women can be women-mothers, working-mothers, or mother-laborers, but they cannot be themselves. By such dual depictions, private duties extend from the private sphere to the public sphere; the duties duplicate and overlap. Therefore, motherhood and the transmission of cultural values are women’s main national duties in both private and public spheres.

Women are expected to perform their glorious national duties. They need to give birth to “nation’s future saviors”. In addition, they have to stay home teaching and socializing their children with Ukrainian culture and traditional values, thus Ukrainian traditional values can be transmitted from generation to generation. Then a unique Ukrainian identity can be developed. Because of such a mission, Ukrainian women have to exemplify invaluable Ukrainian traditional values and characteristics so that they can set an example for their children. This is what K. Motrych is referring to by recalling both the blessed virgin (Christian tradition) and Berehynia (Ukrainian pagan goddess).

The images and values Berehynia bears are carried over from the private sphere, where women traditionally still dominate, to the public one. Berehynia fosters women’s gendered national duties in three ways. Firstly, her characteristics and images confine women to the private sphere, which is the family. These characteristics are, at the same time, carried to public sphere. Second, the Berehynia cult rejects the quest for the rights of women in contemporary Ukraine because she already represents a mythical female empowerment in ancient Ukrainian matriarchal society. In matriarchal society, women were believed to be leaders. They were decision makers, property owners and heirs. Thus, now, through the revival of traditional Ukrainian value and culture including the alleged

matriarchal values, female empowerment is assumed to be automatically attained. Any further request on behalf of women would thus be redundant and unnecessary. Thirdly, the cult of Berehynia only recreates and fosters women's "double burden" because women must work to support their families under the current economic circumstances (see chapter four).

ii. Men's National Duties

Men are leaders and decision-makers in the nation building project. Their "proper" place is in the public sphere. Most of the leaders in the Ukrainian government are men. In 1995, there was not a single woman appointed as minister or head of state committees in Ukraine.³⁸ An article in *Ia Zhinka* [I Am a Woman] "There Are No Women in Our Parliament" questioned the small number of women in the political sphere in Ukraine in 1994. In response to this question, Deputy Mykhailo Syrota commented:

I believe that the time for women in Ukrainian politics has not yet arrived...because we are currently experiencing a power struggle that requires instant reactions and intense passion. This does not come naturally to women.³⁹

Another male politician Volodymyr Oliinyk, the mayor of Cherkassy, believes that "politics is not a home, it is a man's game".⁴⁰ Mykhailo Syrota's comments showed the assumptions about "women's nature", namely that it is not suitable for

³⁸ Solomea Pavlychko, "Progress on Hold: the Conservative Faces of Ukrainian Women", in Mary Buckley (ed.), *Post-Soviet Women: From Baltic to Central Asia* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press) 1997, pp. 223.

³⁹ *Ia Zhinka*, no. 4 (1994), pp. 2-3. Quoted in Marian Rubchak, "The Way We Were: Reconfiguring the Past to Reinvent the Present", unpublished, pp. 8. Sincere thanks to the author.

⁴⁰ *Ia Zhinka*, no. 4 (1994), pp. 2-3. Quoted in Marian Rubchak, "The Way We Were: Reconfiguring the Past to Reinvent the Present", unpublished, pp. 8. Sincere thanks to the author.

politics. Volodymyr Oliinyk insisted that women should be at home. The responses of these two politicians reflect the conservative attitudes of men towards the participation of women in the political sphere.

In 1999, only about ten per cent of the total seats in the Parliament in Ukraine went to women.⁴¹ Only a very small number of Ukraine's ministries and state committees were headed by women.⁴² For example, Valentyna Dovzhenko was made head of the state committee of Ukraine for Family and Youth Affairs. She became the Minister of Ukraine for Family and Youth Affairs from 1997 to 1999.

At home, men remain decision makers and leaders. They are heads of families and they have the final authority in adjudicating over conflicts and problems.⁴³ Despite the fact that women are believed to be the guardians of families, the matriarchal myth does not apply there. This is why some sociologists have commented that patriarchal values are being revived in Ukraine.⁴⁴

iii. Gender and Nation

Women's gendered duties as biological reproducers and cultural transmitters in nation building are examined in the work of Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias. Women are important in the nation building project because they are biological producers of ethnic collectives and groups. They are also ideological reproducers and transmitters of culture. Finally, they are transformed into signifiers of national

⁴¹ United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Gender in Development*, "Women and Men in the Political Parties of Ukraine", *Gender Analysis of Ukrainian Society*, pp. 11-12. Online access <http://www.kiev.ua:8080/undp/gender/pub/analysis>

⁴² An anonymous woman in Central Ukraine showed her pessimistic view on Ukraine's rule of law, "men establish laws. And men alone occupy state posts. A woman cannot protect herself with the help of the legislation" quoted in KIIS, "Gender Issues in the Transition in Urban and Rural Ukraine", *World Bank and Kyiv International Institute of Sociology*, 1999, pp. 59. Her view may not be widespread, however, she is correct that the Ukrainian government is male-dominated and women are largely invisible.

⁴³ KIIS, "Gender Issues in the Transition in Urban and Rural Ukraine", *World Bank and Kyiv International Institute of Sociology*, 1999, pp. 29.

⁴⁴ Solomea Pavlychko, "Feminism and post-communist Ukrainian society", in Rosalind Marsh (ed.), *Women in Russia and Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1996, pp.311.

or ethnic differences.

Certainly, in Ukraine today, the constant mission of Ukrainian women is proclaimed to be giving birth to the nation's saviors. Then they are supposed to take care of their future saviors by staying at home, socializing them and teaching them Ukrainian culture and traditional values. It is the national duty of women to provide for and maintain the health of children and assure the future of the nation. Executive Director of the Children of Chernobyl Relief Fund, Nadia Matkiwsky, emphasizes that "a nation without healthy children is a nation without a future".

Despite the fact that women have such a "sacred" mission, their position in the family is secondary. They are subordinates to their husbands. They are sometimes subject to family violence. Despite the "double burden" of family and work, Ukrainian women must be self-sacrificing and they should neglect their personal interests for the sake of the family and the nation. Ironically, women define themselves in relation to men — as daughters, wives, mothers and grandmothers. Their individualist character is of the least importance.

The sexualization of national duties is apparent. The ultimate goal is for the well being of the nation — the Ukrainian nation. Certainly women's national duties serve the nation building project. They play particular functions, mainly as mothers in the domestic sphere. There are many reasons for the creation and reaffirmation of such national duties of Ukrainian women. Depopulation is negatively affecting Ukraine. The self-sacrificing image is associated with the deteriorating economic situation. Inflation, rises in prices of necessities and the decline in living standard affect many Ukrainian people. Many of them cannot afford to buy daily goods and consumption goods. By promoting a self-sacrificing character, women are encouraged to steadfastly bear the deteriorating economic circumstances.

VI. Conclusion

Nation building remains an important factor in making government policies in post-Soviet Ukraine. The so-called "all-people project" is in fact gendered. As discussed in this chapter, women's national duties in the nation building project are sexualized. They are urged and required to help to build a modern Ukrainian nation. Women's national duties are confined to motherhood and domesticity. At the same time, women are cultural carriers and transmitters who are obliged to teach their children pure Ukrainian culture and traditional values because the revival of Ukrainian culture is central to building a Ukrainian nation. Women's national duties are determined by the male leaders of the project.

The contemporary appeals made to the women of Ukraine to subordinate their interests and needs to the goals of nation building are not new. The historical roots were laid in the late nineteenth century in Galicia, where feminism and women's emancipation first emerged. Nonetheless, when Ukraine gained its independence in 1991, such appeals have been transformed into the needs of building a modern, unified nation. Women are again required to subordinate their interests to the national cause.

Men and women have different national duties in the nation building project. Motherhood and the transmission of Ukrainian cultural values to their children have become women's duties in the project. They are required to model themselves on Berehynia, the ancient pagan goddess. Nonetheless, women's national duties are allocated according to gender. These duties confine women to motherhood and domesticity. Men are the nation builders, leaders and decision makers. They are also the head of families. Ironically, women are subject to "double subordination" in both the private sphere and the public sphere.

Chapter 4: Women's Responses and Organizations

I. Introduction

This chapter aims to explore the responses of women and women's organizations in Ukraine to the nation building project, to the gendered roles it promotes, and to the cult of Berehynia. These responses are important to illustrate how women perceive their re-defined gender roles, and to examine whether or not they find these roles appealing and acceptable. As mentioned in chapter three, the Ukrainian women's movement in the late nineteenth century largely served the national cause. The contemporary women's movement likewise does not primarily work for women's interests. Therefore, the first part of this chapter focuses on the ideology of the women's movement in Ukraine, which is based on Ukraine's mythical matriarchal tradition. This matriarchy allegedly empowers women. The matriarchal myth is tightly linked to the archaeological work on the Trypillian culture, which is believed to be the foundation of Ukrainian culture five thousand years ago, and is also regarded as one of the oldest civilizations in Europe. Whether or not the analysis of these archaeological findings is correct, a prehistoric matriarchy does not guarantee contemporary women and their movement a better future.

Chapter two has already examined the revival of Ukrainian culture as a core part of the nation building project and thus, the second part of this chapter turns attention to the responses of non-governmental women's organizations to the revival of traditional culture.

The second part explores the audiences of the Cult of Berehynia. The responses of these audiences in mass media reveal that the cult of the ancient goddess is appealing to many. Being just like Berehynia is the ultimate ambition of many

women; this is also the requirement of most men.

There are a number of reasons for the Ukrainian government to promote Berehynia as the ideal for Ukrainian women. These reasons include demographic characteristics and economic hardship, which will be analyzed in the third section of this chapter.

Under the present circumstances, many Ukrainian women hope to emulate Berehynia. They are willing to be “happy housewives” and nurturing mothers. Various factors guide women’s choices. Poor economic conditions, general discrimination against women, and difficulties in getting jobs may be some of these factors.

Historical Ukraine is usually described by Ukrainian scholars and government officials as a colony of Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union. The priority of nationalism over women’s issues is not unique to Post-Soviet Ukraine. Countries which were previously under colonial rule encounter similar circumstances as Ukraine does now. Thus, the final part of this chapter use two examples, the Chinese case and the Indian case, to illustrate their similar experiences and responses.

II. The Revival of the “Ukrainian Matriarchal Culture”

i. Women’s Movement and the Matriarchal Myth

The ideology of the contemporary women’s movement in Ukraine is based on Ukraine’s matriarchal myth rather than on “imported” Western feminist ideas of women’s emancipation from patriarchal power.¹ Therefore, it is essential to

¹ Tatiana Zhurzhenko, “Ukrainian Feminism(s): Between Nationalist Myth and Anti-Nationalist Critique”, IWM Working Paper, Vienna, no. 2 (2001), pp. 4.

examine the content and context of this matriarchal myth since the myth justifies resistance to Western feminist ideas. In fact, this mythical matriarchal tradition does not help the women's movement in Ukraine. The myth supports the belief that women in Ukraine have always been powerful and empowered. Thus, there is no need, the argument goes, for Ukrainian women to seek more rights and the satisfaction of their needs. Furthermore, it hinders the full and individual development of women because the myth is only revived partially and selectively; the notion of women as the givers of life and creators of the nation is emphasized while the notion of women as leaders and decision makers is excluded in this revival.

Ukraine's matriarchal myth stems from the archaeological evidence from the Trypillian Culture, which existed during the Neolithic Age within the borders of present day Ukraine. The Trypillian culture was first excavated about one hundred years ago. It was named "Trypillian" because the archaeological site was near the Trypillia village thirty-five kilometers south of Kyiv. Unearthed materials of the culture included pottery, bones, and ceramic female figurines. Some of the female figurines were associated with fertile fields, therefore, the Trypillian civilization was believed to be matriarchal.

Marjia Gimbutas includes the western part of present day Ukraine in her definition of "the Civilization of the Old Europe". She comments "Tripolye is one of the best explored and richest cultures of Old Europe, a true civilization in the best meaning of the word".² Ukrainians are very proud of the Trypillian culture and regard it as "the most developed civilization [of the time], not only in Europe but in

² Marjia Gimbutas, Joan Marler (ed.), *The Civilization of Goddess: the World of Old Europe* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers) 1991, pp.101-102.

the world”,³ “the original Indo-European civilization”⁴ and even speculate that “much of the canon of classical (Greek) mythology was allegedly derived from the Trypillian store of myths and legends”⁵ and that it was “the most cultured country in Europe” of the time.⁶ Such claims made about the significance of the Trypillian culture are perhaps exaggerated, because neither literature, nor written records have been found. Nonetheless, as a seemingly tangible foundation for the matriarchal myth, it has considerable impact in Ukraine today.

ii. Problems with the Matriarchal Myth

Although some scholars tend to regard the Slav pagan goddess Berehynia as the representation of this mythical matriarchal tradition, such representation is questionable. Berehynia, the ancient Slav pagan goddess, has not yet proved to be the *only* image of this allegedly matriarchal culture. Archaeological evidence found from the Trypillian culture shows various representations of female figures on pottery, and on other remains, not clearly Berehynia. Nonetheless, Berehynia could be one of the various goddesses of the period.

The matriarchal myth, as it exists today, reinforces certain gender stereotypes in which women are primarily mothers who give and sustain life. Therefore to rely on the ancient worship of females as the basis of female empowerment would only

³ See such claim by the leader of the Peasant-Democratic Party Serhii Plachynda that “Ukrainian mythology is the oldest in the world. It became the basis for all Indo-European mythologies” in *Solvnyk davno-ukraïnskoï mifolohii* (Kyiv: Ukraïnsky pysmnyk), 1993, pp. 6. Quoted in Andrew Wilson, “National History and Identity in Ukraine and Belarus”, in Graham Smith (ed.), *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: the Politics of National Identities* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press) 1988, pp. 29, pp. 229.

⁴ Andrew Wilson, “National History and Identity in Ukraine and Belarus”, in Graham Smith (ed.), *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: the Politics of National Identities* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press) 1988, pp. 29, pp. 229.

⁵ Andrew Wilson, “National History and Identity in Ukraine and Belarus”, in Graham Smith (ed.), *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: the Politics of National Identities* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press) 1988, pp. 29, pp. 229.

⁶ Andrew Wilson, “National History and Identity in Ukraine and Belarus”, in Graham Smith (ed.), *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: the Politics of National Identities* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press) 1988, pp. 29, pp. 229.

confine women to motherhood, which represents essentially the nurturing and vulnerable nature of females.⁷ The matriarchal myth works ultimately against the interests of women because it constrains women's individual development by limiting them to their primary role as mothers.

III. Women's Organizations and Their Responses

Some of the women's organizations in post-Soviet Ukraine claim to address both national interests and women's interests. However, very often these organizations prioritize national ones. They believe that women's interests cannot be guaranteed until Ukraine is a fully independent and sovereign nation. One of the major issues women's organizations shoulder is the revival of traditional Ukrainian culture. Nonetheless, such revival only confines women to their traditional gender roles as mothers and the nation's creators.

One of the major women's organizations in Ukraine, the Union of Ukrainian Women [Souiz Ukrainok] clearly has this priority. Further, this organization regards the resurgence of Ukrainian culture as its main duty. In its interpretation of the resurgence of traditional values, women's roles are no more than mothers and national reproducers.

The Union of Ukrainian Women was established in 1879 in Lviv in Western Ukraine (part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at that time). It was one of the largest women's organizations in Europe between the two world wars, one which helped in promoting women's education in rural areas, and in getting first aid materials to wounded people.

Although one of its aims was originally to help in the rebirth of the women's

⁷ Cynthia Eller, *the Myth of Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Won't Give Women a Future* (Boston: Beacon Press) 2000, pp. 5, pp. 7, pp. 55, and pp. 65.

movement in late nineteenth century in Galicia, its main goal today is to bring women into the current nation and state building project by encouraging them to cultivate a new generation of Ukrainian youth capable of contributing to the new nation. The speeches of its leaders, its Statute, and the conferences it organizes illustrate not only this priority, but also how the Union defines women's duties in national rebirth.

The national president of the Union, Atena Pashko, offers justifications for the main aims of the Union. First, the Union cannot work purely for the interests of women because the "whole history of it [the Union] has been the struggle for the freedom of Ukraine".⁸ Second, she believes "because of colonialism, the social emancipation of women was inconceivable without national emancipation".⁹ Therefore, the theme of the Union is to consider national rebirth (nation building) the broader task while feminist demands are the narrower one. Thus, the Union cannot just work for the interests of women. It must work for the interests of all people in Ukraine and the Ukrainian nation.

Four conferences the Union organized can also illustrate the main aim of the Union, and its attitudes towards women's roles regarding the rebirth of the nation.

A conference, "Women in the Struggle for Ukrainian Independence" organized by the Union of Ukrainian Women in December 1990, focused upon the active role women have played in Ukraine's struggle for independence since the late nineteenth century.¹⁰ In January 1992, at the Congress of the Union of Women in

⁸ Atena Pashko, "Soiuz Ukrrainok v zhinochomu rusi: Prohramna dopovid", in *Ukraïinka*, 2(26) 1994, p. 5.

⁹ Atena Pashko, "Soiuz Ukrrainok v zhinochomu rusi: Prohramna dopovid", in *Ukraïinka*, 2(26) 1994, p. 5.

¹⁰ Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine: Prospect of Power", from the J.B. Rudnycky Distinguished Lecture Series (Lecture IV), Department of German and Slavic Studies, the University of Manitoba, pp. 4. Online access http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/german_and_slavic/rudnycky_series/4bohachevsky.html. See also United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Gender in Development,

Kyiv, the Union called for a revival of national consciousness and ties of family to the effective function of the nation.¹¹ Interestingly, the three hundred and eighty-eight official delegates of the Union, representing six thousand members, all dressed in traditional embroidered costumes. At another conference, "Women and Democracy" in July 1993, the Union documented "...[women] will know how to give birth and nurture physically and morally healthy, nationally conscious citizens of independent Ukraine".¹² In a meeting held in Ivano-Frankivsk in July 1994 to celebrate the hundred and tenth anniversary of the first public meeting of women in 1884, the meeting was opened with women's gestures of patriotism. It is interesting to note that male representatives from the Ukrainian Parliament to this meeting insisted that despite the fact that the three most important words for independent Ukraine, "freedom", "democracy" and "independence", are of feminine gender linguistically, they must be supported by the "strong male will".¹³

Women, according to the Union, should take up auxiliary but still important roles in the national revival and nation building because women are the mothers who not only give birth to, but also nurture and socialize their children with Ukrainian cultural values. The revival of Ukrainian culture is so important that other

"Women's NGO in the System of Civil Society", *Gender Analysis of Ukrainian Society*, pp. 4. Online access <http://www.kiev.ua:8080/undp/qender/pub/analysis>

¹¹ Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine: Prospect of Power", from the J.B. Rudnycky Distinguished Lecture Series (Lecture IV), Department of German and Slavic Studies, the University of Manitoba, pp. 4. Online access http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/german_and_slavic/rudnyckyj_series/4bohachevsky.html

¹² Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine: Prospect of Power", from the J.B. Rudnycky Distinguished Lecture Series (Lecture IV), Department of German and Slavic Studies, the University of Manitoba, pp. 4. Online access http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/german_and_slavic/rudnyckyj_series/4bohachevsky.html

¹³ Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine: Prospect of Power", from the J.B. Rudnycky Distinguished Lecture Series (Lecture IV), Department of German and Slavic Studies, the University of Manitoba, pp. 4-5. Online access http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/german_and_slavic/rudnyckyj_series/4bohachevsky.html

ideas and ideologies are not yet suitable for Ukraine and for the Union, including feminism.

Another non-governmental women's organization has similar aims as the Union of Ukrainian Women. The Zhinocha Hromada [The Community of Women] also aims to help in the revival of Ukrainian culture and traditional values. Nevertheless, it is also its goal to take into consideration women's interests and concerns, and to have women's voices heard in the government.¹⁴

Other non-government organizations share similar aims with the Union of Ukrainian Women and the Zhinocha Hromada. An organization called Berehynia aims at promoting the revival of the cult of Berehynia as a part of the larger revival of Ukrainian culture. One of the most patriotic women's organizations in Ukraine today is the Olena Teliha Association [Asotsiatsiia Oleny Telihy]. Formed in 1994, the organization aims at promoting "patriotic education of new generations in the spirit of self-sacrifice service to the ideals of Ukrainian democratic statehood".¹⁵ It also works for the regeneration of the national consciousness of Ukrainian women, Ukrainian language, and spirituality, and the preservation of Ukrainian traditions.

There are other non-governmental organizations trying to promote the interests of women. Nonetheless, these organizations are usually narrow in scope. For example, the Businesswomen's Club aims at helping women entrepreneurs.

Indeed, most major non-governmental women's organizations in post-Soviet

¹⁴ Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine: Prospect of Power", from the J.B. Rudnycky Distinguished Lecture Series (Lecture IV), Department of German and Slavic Studies, the University of Manitoba, pp. 5-6. Online access http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/german_and_slavic/rudnyckyj_series/4bohachevsky.html. See also United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Gender in Development, "Women's NGO in the System of Civil Society", *Gender Analysis of Ukrainian Society*, pp. 10. Online access <http://www.kiev.ua:8080/undp/gender/pub/analysis>

¹⁵ Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine, 1990-1998", in Sharon L. Wolchik, Volodymyr Zviglyanich (ed.), *Ukraine: The Search for a National Identity* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers) 2000, pp. 272-273.

Ukraine do not work primarily for women's interests. Instead, they serve the national interests. Thus, women's interests are subsumed in the nation building project, in which the revival of Ukrainian culture and tradition is the priority. Motherhood as women's national duty is largely being accepted as the paradigm for women in the nation building project.

IV. Mass Media

The mass media in Ukraine are active in discussing the cult of Berehynia. Very often, editors, reporters, and columnists accept the revival of Berehynia as an essential component in the resurgence of Ukrainian culture. In these interpretations, women are defined according to their relationships to men; they are wives, mothers, and grandmothers. They are also the creators and reproducers of the Ukrainian nation. The commonly accepted view of women as creators of the nation is supported by the metaphor of Ukraine as a newborn baby, needing its mother(s) to care for it.¹⁶

Usually, reports about Berehynia are associated with nostalgic recollections of folk culture as symbolized by peasant houses and traditional customs. Some reports and articles praise the goddess and her tremendous contributions to the preservation of Ukrainian language and culture. Today, Berehynia represents women's double roles (indeed "double burden") of maintaining the family structure and performing well in the workplace. These burdens show the difficulties of being Berehynia in present-day Ukraine. Yet, it must be noted, these reports demonstrate how Ukrainian women are able to be Berehyni (plural). Two articles illustrate this.

¹⁶ Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "Ukrainian Feminism(s): Between Nationalist Myth and Anti-Nationalist Critique", IWM Working Paper, Vienna, no. 2 (2001), pp. 4.

An article called "Berehyni chy rabyini" ("Berehyni or Slaves?") appeared on the newspaper *Vechirnyi Kyiv* [Evening Kyiv], and expressed concern about the "double burden" of women. On one hand, women take leading roles in agricultural farms and on the other hand, women are solely responsible for family matters. These anonymous female field workers are the Berehynia of today.¹⁷ Certainly, this may be related to the gradual feminization of agriculture in Ukraine. Many Ukrainian women are farm workers partially because village men move to urban areas for better jobs.¹⁸ Two-fifth of all employed women in Ukraine in rural areas engage in agriculture and forestry. Women contribute half of all manual labor on farms, but they perform about two-thirds of the manual work.¹⁹

Another article titled "It is not easy to be a Berehynia" focuses on the "uneasy" role of a city councilwoman, Liudmyla Olekandrivna Zakresko, who has performed her promised assignments in her local jurisdiction well while at the same time not giving up the traditional role of mother.²⁰ Therefore, the councilwoman is a known Berehynia. In other words, she is following the example Berehynia has set up. She is greatly praised by her male colleagues because she can still perform her "natural" role as a good wife and a nurturing mother. At the same time, her career is seen as a bonus.

A male colleague of Liudmyla Olekandrivna Zakresko expresses his deep gratitude towards this modern Berehynia by referring to her as "Woman-Mother,

¹⁷ *Vechirnyi Kyiv* (Evening Kyiv), 20 November, 1998. Quoted in Marian Rubchak, "The Way We Were: Reconfiguring the Past to Reinvent the Present", unpublished, pp. 14, pp. 19. Sincere thanks to the author.

¹⁸ KIIS, "Gender Issues in the Transition in Urban and Rural Ukraine", *World Bank and Kyiv International Institute of Sociology*, 1999, pp. 42.

¹⁹ United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Gender in Development, "Gender Processes in Rural Areas", *Gender Analysis of Ukrainian Society*, pp. 15-16. Online access <http://www.kiev.ua:8080/undp/gender/pub/analysis>

²⁰ *Stolytsia*, no. 17, issue 111 (4-10 March 1999), pp. 1. Sincere thanks to the author. Marian Rubchak, "The Way We Were: Reconfiguring the Past to Reinvent the Present", unpublished, pp. 14, pp. 19.

Woman-Nation Creator". He also regrets that only once a year are "great women" celebrated and praised, saying "It's shameful that we men choose to honor Woman-Mother, Woman-Worker, Woman-Nation Creator only once a year".

He therefore suggests celebrating Women's Day every Friday.²¹ However, it must be noted that, Women's Day in Ukraine has become an "annual anti-feminist ritual" or indeed "the most important male festival" in which women are submissive and passive characters, represented as eager to accept the domination of male power.²²

In a discussion workshop with scholars of Slavic studies, I had an opportunity to listen to Dr. Marian Rubchak's personal account of the "celebration" of Women's Day in Ukraine in 1999. Major streets in the capital city Kyiv were full of flags and posters of beautiful, feminine, and submissive female images of Berehyni.²³ This shows how Women's Day has become a major male festival, just as the Ukrainian born and raised literary scholar Solomea Pavlychko has also commented.

Furthermore, the cult of Berehynia is Ukraine's timeless symbol. The clichéd discourse about Berehynia is legitimated by her enduring importance in Ukrainian culture. One anonymous person who wrote an appeal to urge all Ukrainians to return to the everlasting traditions, insisted this would not only help Ukraine but also all people on the earth.

Why not return to those timeless national traditions, so that we truly might

²¹ According to Marian Rubchak, rest on Friday was indeed a pre-Christian practice. Such suggestion has special meaning: calls for a return to the ancient custom. See Marian Rubchak, "The Way We Were: Reconfiguring the Past to Reinvent the Present", unpublished, pp.37. Sincere thanks to the author.

²² Solomea Pavlychko, "Feminism and post-communist Ukrainian society", in Rosalind Marsh (ed.), *Women in Russia and Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp.307-308.

²³ "Women in Slavic Culture and Literature", June 18-29 2001, a discussion workshop of the Summer Research Laboratory on Russia and Eastern Europe, organized by the Russian and Eastern European Center of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

regard women as Berehynia—goddess and protectress of the domestic hearth. Once our women are Berehyni, Ukraine will be the Berehynia of all humanity.

The position of Berehynia is not only accepted by the common Ukrainian people but also highly praised as a timeless, undisturbed, and national tradition. Because of Ukraine's statelessness and the Soviet era, the cult of Berehynia has been disrupted. Now that Ukraine is an independent and sovereign country, it is being used to legitimate the Ukrainian national culture, recover it, and place it in a superior position.

Attention to the subjectivity of women is essential to a gendered perspective of the roles of women in Ukraine's nation building project. In interviews done with Ukrainian women by a Ukrainian-American journalist who traveled back to her birthplace searching for her identity, Ania Savage describes how the cult of Berehynia is accepted by her interviewees. The first interview was done with the chief editor of *Zhinka*, Lidia Mazur, who summarizes the contemporary ambitions of Ukrainian women.

What do women aspire to?

If she's a young mother, she will tell you her dream is to stay home, take care of the children, and cook. That's the cult of Berehynia fulfilled.²⁴

Another interview done with Deputy Iryna Belosusova, who characterizes women in contemporary Ukrainian society, centers on the gender stereotypes conveyed by Berehynia and her belief that Berehynia represents the honorable female roles that should remain in Ukrainian society.

²⁴ Ania Savage, *Return to Ukraine* (Texas: Texas A&M University Press, College Station) 2000, pp.155-159.

In our society the cultural stereotype Berehynia immediately comes to my mind: protectress of the domestic hearth, and mother as giver of life and of our nation. These are sacred and honored female roles. They have been throughout the history, and they should remain.²⁵

Ukrainian women are convinced to be Berehyni. Importantly, the cult of Berehynia confines Ukrainian women to the role of mothers, and thus confirms their subordinate position within families. Women accept this and indeed aspire to emulate the model of Berehyni.

V. Practical Reasons for Promoting Berehynia

Certainly, there are some practical purposes that the cult of Berehynia serves. It serves the current demographic needs. Moreover, the Ukrainian government wants self-sacrifice from women. Women have been a major source of labor in the job market, and have been the breadwinners for their family. Yet, women are also responsible for the household as well.

i. Demographic Factors

Berehynia confirms Ukrainian women's role as mothers. Fertility is stressed. There are practical reasons for the promotion of fertility. Demographic statistics can illustrate the need for higher fertility in post-Soviet Ukraine. Ukraine has a huge population of fifty million, which is the second highest population in Europe. However, since the period of 1990-2000, Ukraine has experienced a negative growth in population (-0.8%).²⁶ Suffering from a negative difference between births and deaths from 1992 to 1996 at an increasing rate, Ukraine's population has declined by one million since 1990. This trend has continued since independence. Ukraine has lost near one million people from 1996 to 2000 (see Figure 2).²⁷ According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census predictions, Ukraine will continue to

²⁵ *Ukraïna*, no. 1, November 1999.

²⁶ The U.S. Bureau of the Census, International Data Base. Online access <http://www.census.gov>

²⁷ The U.S. Bureau of the Census, International Data Base. Online access <http://www.census.gov>

suffer a negative growth in population from the periods of 1990-2050 (ten-year increment scale) (see Figure 3).²⁸

Year	Population (in thousands)	Change in Population
1980	50,047	N/A
1990	51,600	N/A
1991	51,650	50
1992	51,691	41
1993	51,609	-82
1994	51,378	-231
1995	51,090	-288
1990-1995		-510
1996	50,772	-318
1997	50,448	-324
1998	50,125	-323
1999	49,811	-314
2000	49,507	-304
1996-2000	N/A	-1,583

Figure 2: Changes in Population in Ukraine 1990-2000

Period	Population Growth (%)
1980-1990	0.3
1990-2000	-0.8 ²⁹ (actual)
2000-2010	-0.4 (predicted)
2010-2020	-0.3 (predicted)
2020-2030	-0.4 (predicted)
2030-2040	-0.5 (predicted)
2040-2050	-0.7 (predicted)

Figure 3: Population Growth in Ukraine 1980 to 2050

The decline in population is partially caused by a sharp fall in fertility rates. Since 1989, the fertility rate has been decreasing rapidly. The number of families

²⁸ The U.S. Bureau of the Census, International Data Base. Online access <http://www.census.gov>

²⁹ The U.S. Department of Commerce, Country Guide: Ukraine, Commercial Service. Online access <http://www.usatrade.gov>.

with one child or no children is growing. At present, Ukraine belongs to the group of countries that have the lowest birth rates. In 1996, the crude birth rate was 9.1 (newborns) per 1000 population, which was 28.3% lower than in 1990. The overall fertility rate fell to 1.3 children per couple (1.1 in urban settlements and 1.8 in rural areas).

The decline in birth rates has also been accompanied by the concentration of births in young mothers. In 1996, 84.7% of children were born to mothers under the age of 30, in contrast to 80% one year earlier. Moreover, the number of children born out of wedlock is on the rise. In 1995, more than one-tenth of children were born to unwed mothers which about one-fifth more than those in 1990. The fall in fertility is due to the fact many couples cannot afford to have more than one child and many decide not to have any because they need the wives' incomes to support the family and thus cannot leave wives home to take care of the children. Many couples would prefer a small family so that they can devote all their resources to their one child. Economic hardship and the disastrous effects of the Chernobyl disaster have been significant factors in leading to the decline in reproduction rates.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians were affected by the catastrophic effects of the Chernobyl accident on 26 April 1986. Reports showed that more fifteen million people have been victimized by the radiation disaster. Of the six hundred thousand people involved with the cleanup, many are now dead or sick. Fifteen years after the accident, babies are still born with no eyes, no limbs, and with various types and intensities of disabilities. Decrease in reproduction is also due to the fact that many couples are concerned about deterioration in the environment because of the Chernobyl accident.

As a result of the trend of depopulation, the Ukrainian government encourages

its female citizens to bear more children for the sake of the future development of the country. If women continue to choose not to be mothers, Ukraine will prolong its depopulation process, which will negatively affect its development. Recent demographic statistics show that the child population (zero to seventeen years old) in Ukraine has started to decrease since 1990. From 1990 to 1998, the child population decreased by about 10 % (from 13,257, 000 in 1990 to 11,839,000 in 1998).³⁰ The statistical figure for child population for the range of zero to four years old is more striking. From 1990 to 1998, the total number of children of this age range dropped by 34 % (from 3,714,000 to 2,442,000).³¹

Thus the Ukrainian government urges female citizens to follow the example of Berehynia, the goddess of fertility, to bear more saviors of the nation. Further, to bear more children is only part of women's duties. It's also women's duty to protect their children and give them a safe environment. As the Chief Executive of the Children of Chernobyl Relief Fund, Nadia Matkiwsky, notes, "a nation without healthy children is a nation without a future".³²

Decline in population and low fertility rate lead to various problems. One of the major problems is a high dependency rate. Ukraine's elderly dependency rate (the ratio of age above sixty population to eighteen to fifty-nine population) increased from 1989 to 1992, and from 1995 to 1998. The "dome-shaped" population pyramid of 1989 and the "bell-shaped" population pyramid of 1998 below show the demographic characteristics and potential demographic and social problems Ukraine may face. One of the social problems is aging. High dependency and aging

³⁰ "Women in Transition", *The MONEE Project. CEE/CIS/Baltics. Regional Monitoring Report*, no. 6 (1999), Statistical annex, pp. 111-112.

³¹ "Women in Transition", *The MONEE Project. CEE/CIS/Baltics. Regional Monitoring Report*, no. 6 (1999), Statistical annex, pp. 111-112.

³² Children of Chernobyl Relief Fund Newsletter, vol. Xvi (Summer 1999), p. 1. See also <http://www.childrenofchornobyl.org/hrclinton.htm>.

problem lead to a lower living standard and to increasing pressure on social security and social welfare systems. The situation is further complicated by the deterioration of social welfare and public health services in post-Soviet Ukraine. Ukraine, like other newly independent countries of the former Soviet republics, is actively engaged in economic, social, and political transformations, and has experienced budget deficit for most years. As a result, the Ukrainian government has cut funds for public health and social services.

The creation and maintenance of families is vital to ensuring the existence of favorable circumstances for development. This is because a family is the basic unit in society. Stable family structure can also bring the stability to society and thus a young population supports the continuous development of the country. A continuous decline in the population and birth rate, along with the aging problem, will eventually over-burdens the government’s social welfare system. Thus, depopulation and decline in birth rate threatens the continuous development of Ukraine, and is a problem that the Ukrainian government must solve.

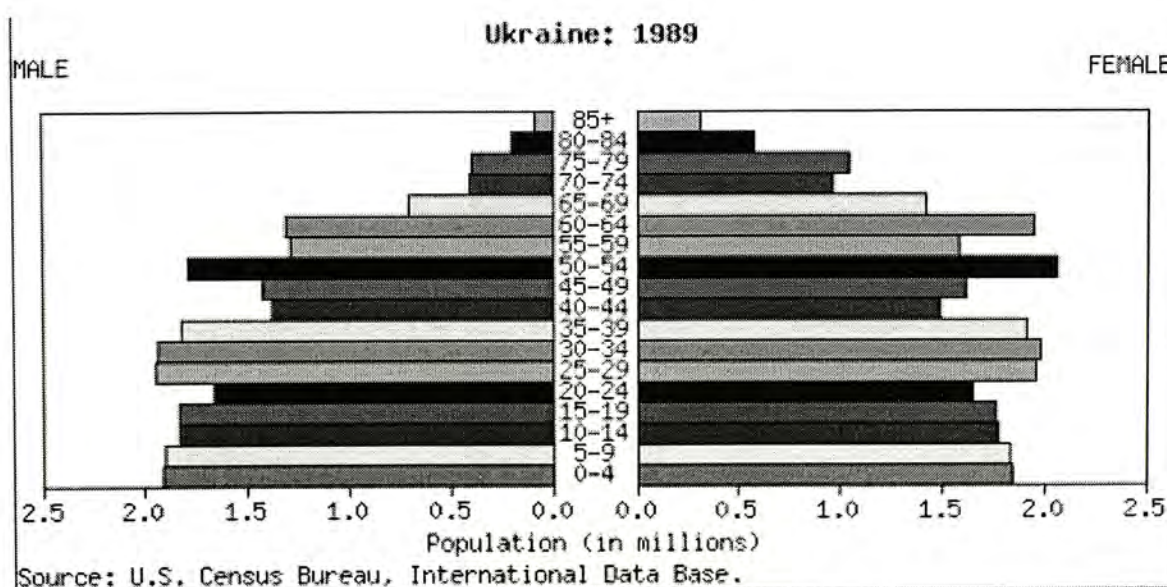


Figure 4: Population Pyramid of Ukraine in 1989.³³

³³ The U.S. Census Bureau, International Date Base. Online access <http://www.census.gov>

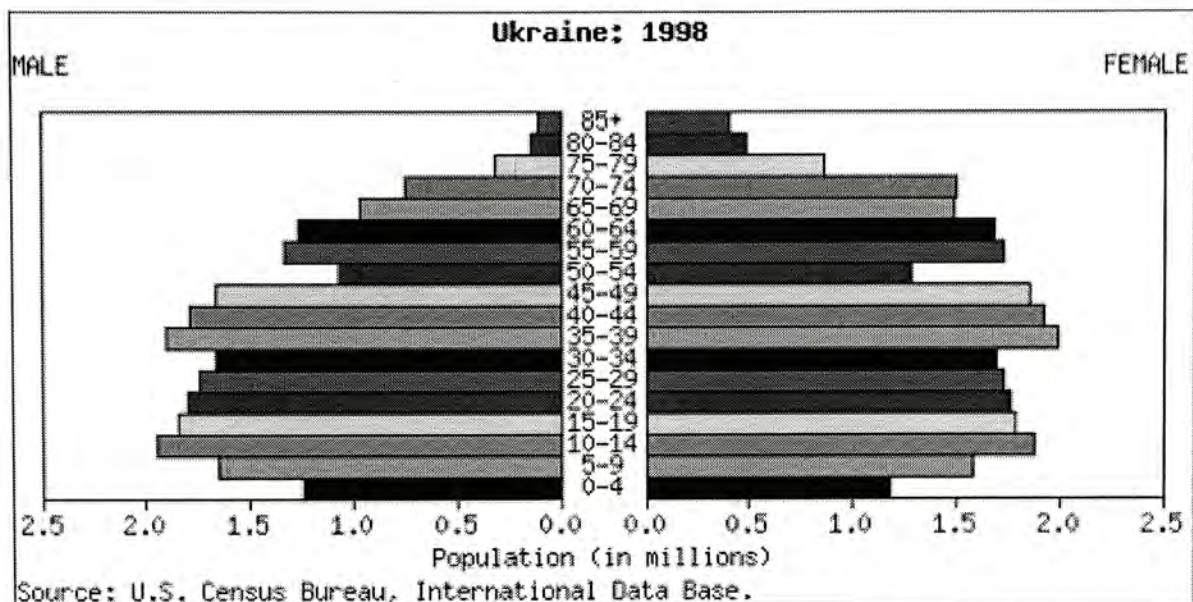


Figure 5: Population Pyramid of Ukraine in 1998.³⁴

ii. Economic Hardship

Economic hardship is common in societies in transition. Ukraine is no exception. The independent Ukrainian government has had to face various problems after the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1989, and it has to solve the problems that perestroika and glasnost could not. Economic, social, political and cultural issues are all the work of the new government.

Ukraine's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell almost one-fifth from 1991 to 1992. In 1994, GDP dropped almost a quarter when compared with the previous year. The real GDP also declined from 1996 to 1999 (Figure 7). GDP per capita also decreased greatly which reflected a considerable decline in Ukrainians' income. Furthermore, both Gross Industrial Output (GIO) and Consumer Goods Production (CGP) fell greatly from 1991 to 1994 (Figure 6). Consumption also shrank. Ukrainians did not consume or they could not afford to buy goods because their deposable income fell. As a result of this, production for consumer goods adjusted accordingly.

³⁴ The U.S. Census Bureau, International Date Base. Online access <http://www.census.gov>

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Gross Domestic Product	-2.4	-13.5	-16.8	-14.2	-23.0	-12.8
Gross Industrial Output (GIO)	-0.4	-4.8	-6.4	-7.6	-27.7	-11.0
Gross Agriculture Output (GAO)	-3.7	-13.2	-8.4	1.5	17.0	-2.0
Consumer Goods Production (CGP)	5.8	-5.1	-9.4	-15.3	-26.7	N/A
Consumer Prices (annual average %) ³⁵	N/A	91	1210	4735	891	376

Figure 6: Ukrainian Domestic Economy 1990-1995 ³⁶

	1996	1997	1998	1999
Real GDP Growth Rate (%)	-10.0	-3.2	-1.7	-0.4
GDP Per Capita (actual US\$)	854	863	618	619

Figure 7: Ukrainian Domestic Economy 1996-1999 ³⁷

	1994	1995 ³⁸	1996	1997	1998	1999
Inflation (%)	991	477	40.0	10.3	20.0	22.0
Unemployment (official %)	0.4	0.5	1.6	3.1	4.3	4.8

Figure 8: Inflation in Ukraine 1994-1999 ³⁹

Ukrainians also experienced inflation. The inflation rate reached a peak of over 10,000 % in 1993.⁴⁰ Prices of goods and services rose tremendously since independence. Consumer prices kept rising since 1991 and reached 4,735 % in 1994 when compared with prices in 1990. Furthermore, family wages decreased more than half since 1990.⁴¹ More than eight straight years of declining GDP have led to widespread poverty. The standard of living for most citizens has declined

³⁵ Ukraine: 1999 Country Profile, Business Forum of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

³⁶ John E. Tedstrom, "Ukraine's Economy: Strategic Issues for Successful Recovery", in Taras Kuzio (ed.), *Contemporary Ukraine: Dynamics of Post-Soviet Transformation* (London: M.E.Sharpe) 1998, pp. 203.

³⁷ The U.S. Department of Commerce, Country Guide: Ukraine, Commercial Service. <http://www.usatrade.gov>.

³⁸ 1994 and 1995 data from King Banaian, *The Ukrainian Economy Since Independence* (Cheltenham; Northampton; MA: Edward Elgar), 1999, pp.100.

³⁹ The U.S. Department of Commerce, Country Guide: Ukraine, Commercial Service. <http://www.usatrade.gov>.

⁴⁰ Paul Hare, Mohammed Ishaq, and Saul Estrin, "Ukraine: The Legacies of Central Planning and the Transition to a Market Economy" in Taras Kuzio (ed.), *Contemporary Ukraine: Dynamics of Post-Soviet Transformation* (London: M.E.Sharpe) 1998, pp. 182.

⁴¹ Poverty in Ukraine; Report No. 15602-UA, the World Bank, 27 June 1996.

significantly since the early 1990s.

Since the Soviet era, women have been household managers in charge of exchanging necessities with other families or people. They have always borne the brunt of poor economic situations: poor standard of living and inflation. Nonetheless, they are asked to bear these meekly, without complaint. The self-sacrificing characteristics that Berehynia promotes require women to bear the deteriorating economic circumstances.

VI. "Double Burden" Still

Certainly, there are several reasons for the Ukrainian government to promote the cult of Berehynia. Why, though, do Ukrainian women wish to model themselves on Berehynia?

After gaining independence in 1991, Ukraine has been undergoing various transitions from a socialist system to capitalist one. The first novel phenomenon after communism was unemployment. Unemployment was theoretically non-existent before, but it struck Ukrainian society severely. Women were at a greater disadvantage than men under these conditions. Unemployment does have a female face. Among those unemployed (official data), about two-thirds of them are women. (But the *Den* [Day]) said it is about eighty per cent.⁴²) Among these women, seventy per cent of them have higher education and among these, forty-five per cent of them have graduated from higher education institutions.⁴³ The *Den* [Day] reported that there was a new wave of unemployment in 1999 (or

⁴² Ruslana Pisotska, "Thank You! You're Fired. A new wave of unemployment is expected in early 1999", *the Den* (Day), Internet edition, <http://www.day.kiev.ua/DIGEST/1998/37/finance/fin1.htm>.

⁴³ KIIS, "Gender Issues in the Transition in Urban and Rural Ukraine", *World Bank and Kyiv International Institute of Sociology*, 1999, pp. 20.

the ninth wave). Apart from these data, it is also difficult for unemployed women to return to the labor market. There are constraints for them to do so despite the fact that most of them do want to work. One of the constraints is that women are so firmly confined to the domestic sphere. Women's roles are confined to *dyad—maternity-housekeeping* and doing housework and child rearing are their duties. These duties are in many ways mandatory.⁴⁴

Everyday life is affected by the shrinking of the consumer markets, rising food prices, decreasing trade, and fewer and fewer jobs. Such a deteriorating economic environment affects every person in Ukraine, both men and women.⁴⁵ Yet, women are more vulnerable than men for several reasons. Women are regarded as the secondary sex and subordinate to men. Because of their status in society, they are not treated on an equal basis. On average, women earn only seventy per cent of the salary men do of the same occupation.⁴⁶ Research also shows that greater gender inequality in wages becomes apparent in Ukraine when compared with other Eastern European countries.⁴⁷

Moreover, women are discriminated against at work and they are sometimes sexually harassed by their bosses or supervisors. Nonetheless, women have only two choices: quit or stay. The following quotes reveal this.

A working woman:

⁴⁴ KIIS, "Gender Issues in the Transition in Urban and Rural Ukraine", *World Bank and Kyiv International Institute of Sociology*, 1999, pp. 32.

⁴⁵ See Fangfang Yang, *Chuang wai shi Heihai: lai zi Wugelan xiao zhen de yang guang shou ji* [The Black Sea is Just Outside: A Diary from a town in Ukraine] (Taipei : Zhiku gufen youxian gongsi), 2000. It is a diary written by a Chinese girl who went to a small town in Crimea to meet her family old friend. Her diary showed the really bad living situation in Crimea, including the irregular supplies of hot water in winter, and the lack of goods in stores.

⁴⁶ KIIS, "Gender Issues in the Transition in Urban and Rural Ukraine", *World Bank and Kyiv International Institute of Sociology*, 1999, pp. 19.

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Brainerd, "Women in Transition: Changes in Gender Wage Differentials in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union", *Industrial & Labor Relations Review*, vol. 54, issue 1 (October 2000), pp. 138-162.

My daughter was hired by a private firm. And the owner told her: " Now you are my property. I will do with you everything I want". She worked for two months and left.⁴⁸

An unemployed woman:

I was subjected to sexual harassment, but I think I did not give him an occasion for it. I did not allow him to unwind this story. As a result I was fired.⁴⁹

Thus, it is not uncommon for women to hope to stay at home and be Berehynia. The work place is unpleasant and they are underpaid and abused. Nonetheless, the cult of Berehynia confines women to the private sphere. It not only discourages them from work, but also dissuades them from engaging in public activities on the grounds that they need to devote all their time to giving birth and to nurturing their children. Thus, home is women's proper sphere. Yet, in post-Soviet Ukraine, a family cannot survive upon a single income. A dual income instead is desperately needed. As a result, women are given the duties of giving birth and nurturing children, and if they can find and retain a job in the current climate, they are still required to work to earn a living for the family. The "Double burden" phenomenon, which was common in the Soviet era, still remains in post-Soviet Ukraine.⁵⁰ The cult of Berehynia, thus, only fosters women's "double burden".

An article titled "Women after Communism: A Bitter Freedom" talks about the hard life of Czech, Polish and Hungarian women after the fall of communism.⁵¹

⁴⁸ KIIS, "Gender Issues in the Transition in Urban and Rural Ukraine", *World Bank and Kyiv International Institute of Sociology*, 1999, pp.60-61.

⁴⁹ KIIS, "Gender Issues in the Transition in Urban and Rural Ukraine", *World Bank and Kyiv International Institute of Sociology*, 1999, pp. 60-61.

⁵⁰ In a private discussion with university students from Ukraine, I was able to listen to the description of double burden Ukrainian women experience. My classmate Vira Byy who is a graduate student in Lviv University told me how her mother, a physician has been solely responsible for nurturing her and her sister, housework as well as the heavy workload of her occupation. Vira Byy and I were students at Harvard Summer School (2000). She was sponsored by the Harvard Ukrainian Summer Institute to help students who are learning Ukrainian.

⁵¹ Elzbieta Matynia, "Women after Communism: A Bitter Freedom", *Social Research*, vol. 61,

Women in these former socialist countries are required not only to shoulder a "double burden" as they have done in the past, but also a "triple double". Apart from the full-time jobs these women have to work for a family wage, they are solely responsible for housework and the nurturing of their children. These women also have to earn extra income by working as part-time hawkers in weekend-markets because of economic hardship. The title alone powerfully illustrates the dilemma women face after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Ukrainian women also "enjoy" bitter freedom. They certainly face the same problems as Czech, Polish and Hungarian women are enduring in their transitional economies. On one hand, they are "advised" to follow the example of Berehynia, to be excellent mothers and thus to be confined to domesticity. On the other hand, they are also required to engage in economic activities in order to generate income to support their families. Apart from their normal jobs, some of the women also risk engaging in "shuttle business". In other words, some Ukrainian women who live on the Ukrainian-Polish border, engage in cross border trade by bringing cheaper goods from Poland or Ukraine and selling them in either country. This border trade is dangerous because these women can be caught by customs or the police. Nevertheless, Ukrainian women have to take risks because they have to supply necessary goods for their families. It is supposed to be a woman's duty.⁵²

Apart from women's "double burden", women in Ukraine are subject to another risk. Ukraine has already become a center for "exporting" women to Western Europe, the Middle East and Asia for prostitution. Very often, Ukrainian women are trafficked either by force or by false advertisements to these places. Although the

issue 2 (Summer 1994), pp. 351-377.

⁵² Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "Gender and Identity Formation in Post-Socialist Ukraine: The Case of Shuttle Business" in Rae Bridgman, Sally Cole, and Heather Howard-Bobiwash (ed.), *Feminist Fields: Ethnographic Insights* (Peterborough, Ont: Broadview Press) 1999, pp. 243-263.

issue of "white slavery" has aroused concerns from the United Nations,⁵³ the United States,⁵⁴ international women's organizations,⁵⁵ some Ukrainian people,⁵⁶ the Ukrainian government has adopted only limited measures to tackle the trafficking of women. Some reports even indicate that government officers are involved in the illegal trafficking of women across borders, or that they co-operate with the mafia to earn money from the illegal transportation of women. Ironically, some government officers justify the "trade" of Ukrainian women as a way to earn necessary foreign funds for the development of Ukraine.⁵⁷ Therefore, it is not surprising to know that the Ukrainian government neither initiates any measures to combat the illegal trafficking of women, nor pays full attention to it as a significant problem.

The trafficking of women also illustrates the attitudes of people towards these victims who luckily escape from their trafficked conditions. These victims are viewed not as victims, but as bad women who would sell their bodies or who would be willing to engage in the sex trade. Family members of these women are ashamed of them. Their fellow villagers discriminate against them. Victims do not get help either from the central government or the local government. Despite the fact that these victims may have "earned" foreign funds for their country, they are

⁵³ "Women in Transition", *The MONEE Project. CEE/CIS/Baltics. Regional Monitoring Report*, no. 6 (1999), chapter 5, pp. 11

⁵⁴ The concerns of the United States were expressed in the speech of Hilary Rodham Clinton in Lviv. See also the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), "Putting an End to the Trafficking of Women in the NIS and CEE", August 2000. Online access www.irex.org

⁵⁵ See the Winrock International, *Women's International Network News*, vol. 25, issue 3 (Summer 1999), pp. 73.

⁵⁶ A gateway to Ukrainian issues www.brama.com has established a sub-section on the victims of trafficking of women. The sub-section interviews some victims, obviously, women who have been brought to other places for sexual trade. Some of them were abused and tortured. They cannot return home until they have "paid" the fees needed for bringing them to brothels. See also "Plenty of Muck, Not Much Money", *Economist*, vol. 351, issue 8118 (05/08/99), pp.52.

⁵⁷ See the Winrock International, *Women's International Network News*, vol. 24, issue 2 (Spring 1998), pp. 25

not considered to be the nation's "valuable" citizens.⁵⁸

Women are the big losers in post-Soviet Ukraine. They suffer in family, at work and in society. Sexual abuse, family violence, sexual harassment in the workplace, rape, and trafficking of women are all possible threats that endanger women. Ironically, women are not regarded as victims in such cases.⁵⁹ The sexual crime rate against women has risen since 1991. It is estimated that sexual perversion rose three times from 1991 to 1996.⁶⁰ Home provides no shelter, the law no protection, and the public no sympathy for women.

VII. Gender, Nation and Post-colonialism

Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak uses the ideas of colonialism in her analyses of women's activities in Galicia. She regards the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a colonial power and Western Ukraine as a colony. She is not the only scholar who applies the concept of colonialism to describe Ukraine's situation before its independence. Russification was a forced cultural assimilation that destroyed Ukrainian culture. It is useful here to compare and contrast women's duties in different national liberation movements. Two cases are discussed here: China before the 1911 Revolution, and Post-colonial India. These two cases illustrate women's particular functions in nationalist struggle and the priority of nationalism and national interests over the interests of women.

i. Gender and Nationhood: China before the 1911 Revolution

Pre-revolution China was regarded as a semi-colony in the late nineteenth

⁵⁸ "Currency Prostitutes" is the term that refers to the sex trade

⁵⁹ KIIS, "Gender Issues in the Transition in Urban and Rural Ukraine", *World Bank and Kyiv International Institute of Sociology*, 1999, pp. 27-29, 55-61.

⁶⁰ United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Gender in Development*, "The Problem of Violence against Women", *Gender Analysis of Ukrainian Society*, pp. 2. Online access <http://www.kiev.ua:8080/undp/gender/pub/analysis>

century. Various great powers, like Britain, Germany, the United States, Japan, France and Russia all occupied lands in China in their own "spheres of influence". Nonetheless, China did try to strengthen itself. Yet, reforms ended in vain. China was still backward and uncompetitive.

It was Chinese male scholars who began to link the nation's weaknesses to those of Chinese women. These traditional male scholars regarded Chinese women as illiterate, ignorant, traditional, and physically weak because of their bound-feet. Therefore, they could not give birth to strong Chinese children, who were to be the pillars of China's future. Male scholars believed that Chinese women, on one hand were sources of China's weaknesses and backwardness, yet at the same time, were the potential saviors of the nation. If Chinese women could be educated, liberated and stronger, then they would be able to give birth to healthier and stronger children. They could also socialize their children with more "Western" and educated minds, so that China could have a better future.⁶¹ The mixed blessing of women to the nation indeed aroused concern over women's situation in China's long history. Some avant-garde females even formed their own organizations to work for the interests and benefits of women. The women's movement emerged as a subsidiary to the full-fledged national movement. Nationhood and motherhood were thus inextricably linked. Women, perhaps for

⁶¹ One of the foremost scholars and reformers who linked women's emancipation and China's one was Kong You-wei. Educated in traditional Confucius values, Kong noted the sources of China's backwardness and weakness with China's weak female citizens. Thus, the first step to build a strong and modern China would start from 'reforming' and 'improving' women who were mothers of China's future. See Kang Youwei (1858-1927), "Qing jin funu chanzu zou" [*Requesting a Ban on Binding Feet of Women*], in Zhongguo shixueshi [Chinese Historical Association] (ed.), *Wuxu bianfa* [The 1898 Reform Movement] (Shanghai: Shenzhou guoguangshe) 1953, vol.2, pp. 242-244. Liang Qichao (1873-1929), "Lun nuxue" [*On Women's Education*], in Li Yuning and Zhang Yufa (ed.), *Jindai Zhongguo nuquan yundong shiliao* [Documents on Feminist Movement in Modern China, 1842-1911] and "Jiechanzu hui xu" [Discussion of the Anti-Footbinding Society], in Liang Qichao, *Yingbingshi wenji* [Writings on an ice-drinker's studio] (Taipei: Taiwan Zhonghua shuju) 1960, vol. 1, pp. 1-93. Also Charlotte L. Beahan, "In the Public Eyes: Women in Early Twentieth-Century China", in Richard W. Guisso, Stanley Johannesen (ed.), *Women in China: Current Directions in Historical Scholarships* (New York: Philo Press, E. Mellon Press) 1981, pp.215-238.

first time in Chinese history, were included in national affairs; they were more than just citizens, they were “mothers of the nation”.

The popular and accepted ideology, however, was that women could not be liberated from the traditional feudal system if the nation was not first liberated from the imperialistic activities of the great powers. Women, therefore, had to devote themselves to national struggle first, in order to achieve their own liberation.

Certainly, women played an important role in this national struggle. However, they were confined to being the “mothers” of better and stronger citizens. Their own interests were neither heard nor respected because their roles were limited to their reproductive function. Women’s education was not for the benefit of women. It was aimed at training women to be “virtuous wives and excellent mothers”, who could manage the household well and educate their children. Women’s individual interests and training were not an aim of women’s education.

The Chinese case illustrates some parallels with the Ukrainian case. Women’s organized activities in Galicia worked for the interests of the national liberation movement, while women’s individual concerns were not the goal. National interests were prioritized over all other interests, including women’s interests, as they continue to be in Ukraine today.

ii. Feminism, Nationalism and the Third World

The women’s movement in post-colonial India was likewise subsumed under the national movement. The totalizing effects of nationalism were obvious. Nationalism typically serves as “an overarching umbrella” that subsumes other issues, including women’s issues.⁶² Thus, when Indian nationalists speak on behalf

⁶² R. Radhakishnan, “Nationalism, Gender, and the Narrative of Identity”, in Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer and Patricia Yaeger (ed.), *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (New York: Routledge), 1992, pp.78.

of other issues, they speak in the language of nationalism. Women's interests were only represented in national terms, while at the same time women were kept mute. The old clichéd saying is that women could not be liberated from colonialism if the nation is not. Women could only be free if the nation is first liberated from the influences of colonialism. As a result, the women's movement was marginalized. If one were to speak of women's interests without putting them into national context or referring first to the nation, would be considered irrational and anti-nationalistic. Clearly, the women's movement and promotion of women's interests could not develop out of the shadow of nationalist movements. Leaders of Indian women's movement, like their Ukrainian counter-parts, are skeptical about feminism as well.

The term "feminism" does come burdened with particular assumptions due to the circumstances under which feminism was produced. Therefore, when the Western feminists criticized the women's movement in the third world for being too conservative and too slow, women leaders of the Third World disapproved of such criticisms because of the hidden Western-centric assumptions of feminism and its misunderstanding of the situation in the third world. Chandra T. Mohanty criticizes the Western feminist discourse on third world women particularly on the application of ethnocentric notions and assumptions of the term "Feminism".⁶³ She also insists that feminists from the third world ought to develop their own feminist ideas according to the circumstances.

Interestingly, feminists and leaders of women organizations in Ukraine share the same view. As discussed earlier in this chapter, feminism was neither accepted

⁶³ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" in Chandra T. Mohanty, Ann Russo, Lourdes Torres (ed.), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press) 1991, pp.51-80.

by most of the Ukrainian men nor by Ukrainian women. To date, feminism remains unpopular in the eyes of Ukrainians. Some women leaders have suggested that Ukraine should go the "Ukrainian Way", that is to develop something called "organic feminism" or "national feminism" instead of just "feminism" because the imposition of Western feminism would alien and incompatible with Ukrainian culture and circumstances.⁶⁴ The term feminism remains unconvincing to most women in Ukraine. Some women believe that being feminists would lose their femininity and attractiveness.⁶⁵ The mass media in Ukraine also disapproves of feminism. For example, the first issue of the so called first feminist magazine, *Piata Pora* [the Fifth Season] gave a mixed message of feminist and traditional imagery. On one hand, it contained an interview with Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, a prominent American feminist of Ukrainian heritage. Yet, on the other hand, there were depictions of traditional elderly women with a young girl, and with them, traditional embroidery and the national symbol of a trident.⁶⁶ The popular Ukrainian newspaper *Den* [Day] did a survey on gender issues in 1997. Interestingly, the article expressed that "in the prevailing circumstances, a feminist movement just facilitates the subordination of women".⁶⁷

VIII. Conclusion

It is interesting to note that Berehynia appears in new, modern and

⁶⁴ For example, director of Gender Studies Center at the Academy of Sciences Nila Zborowska insisted that Ukraine should develop its own feminist idea. Quoted in Marian Rubchak, "Women's Issues in Ukraine. Past and Present", unpublished, pp. 3. Sincere thanks to the author.

⁶⁵ Solomea Pavlychlo, "Progress on Hold: the Conservative Faces of Women in Ukraine", in Mary Buckley (ed.), *Post-Soviet Women: from Baltic to Central Asia* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press) 1997, pp.231-223.

⁶⁶ *Piata Pora*, no. 1 (January 1993), pp. 1. See also Marian Rubchak, "The Way We Were: Reconfiguring the Past to Reinvent the Present", unpublished, pp.6. Sincere thanks to the author.

⁶⁷ The *Den*, 14 October 1997.

contemporary form. A large statue of "Green" Berehynia stands in Lviv, the second largest city in Ukraine. Interestingly, the *Den*, one of the most popular newspapers in Ukraine, justifies this by claiming that because Lviv is a green city, that is why Berehynia is green.⁶⁸ The old tradition is now in new and contemporary dress, so that she can remain fashionable and adapted to the new era.

Berehynia is now a core part of the matriarchal tradition and the Ukrainian culture as well. The revival of Ukrainian tradition is a prioritized task in the nation building project. Currently, Ukrainian women are required to model themselves on Berehynia in order to help the nation. This modeling only confines women to motherhood and domesticity. Women respond to the cult of Berehynia positively, partly because of the poor situation in the job market where women are usually subject to discrimination at work, and are disadvantaged in getting jobs in the first place. Thus, some women may regard being mothers and staying home as desirable. Nevertheless, staying at home is impossible because a single income is not enough. Thus, women have to work, and they have also have to shoulder the responsibilities of nurturing their children and housework at the same time. Berehynia, therefore, only fosters and intensifies women's "double burden". Some Ukrainian women even bear a "triple burden".

There are certain reasons for the government to promote the cult of Berehynia, including the risk of depopulation, low fertility, and the deteriorating economic situation. Ukrainian women are asked to sacrifice their own interests for the sake of the nation.

Certainly, Ukraine is not the only country that requires women to work for the sake of the nation. Indeed, similar national discourses are found in some countries

⁶⁸ The *Den*, www.day.kiev.ua/DIGEST/2001/31/sport/sp1.htm

that have experienced colonial rule. Male scholars and reformers in China in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century urged women to “enlighten” themselves in order to bear and nurture better and stronger citizens. Women played a functional role in China’s national movement. The Indian case illustrates how women’s interests and issues are totally subsumed in the post-colonial nation building processes. Ukraine provides similar rhetoric and responses to the balance of nationalism and gender issues, and to feminism as well.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

I. Women's National Duties

Three main themes are discussed and presented in this thesis. Firstly, nation building project requires different duties from women and men. For women, their national duties are typically confined to motherhood and domesticity. They are required to model themselves on the ancient pagan goddess Berehynia. For men, they are the nation builders, leaders of the Ukrainian government, and heads of families.

Women are asked again to put aside their own interests for those of the nation. Certainly, this is not new; its historical roots can be traced back to the women's organized activities in Galicia in the nineteenth century when Ukrainian women were required to work for national liberation. The common ideology was that women could not be liberated if the nation was not first liberated. Today, Ukraine has gained its independence. Nevertheless, women are requested again to sacrifice personal interests for the sake of the nation. A liberated nation does not guarantee the liberation of women.

Berehynia is also center to the Ukrainian matriarchal myth of the empowerment of women. The myth of the empowerment of women in Ukrainian pre-history has become the basis of the women's movement in Ukraine. Nonetheless, this matriarchal myth does not guarantee women a better future because the revival of the myth is selective. Women's reproductive function is revived. Women's leading roles are not. Thus, the second main theme, based upon the analyses of this matriarchal myth, shows the repudiation of the quest for women's rights and protections by claiming that Ukrainian women have been empowered since antiquity. Thus, further protections and rights would be redundant and

unnecessary.

Despite the efforts in pushing women back to domestic sphere, women must also work in order to earn money to support their families under the current deteriorating economic circumstances. Therefore, the third main theme discusses how the cult of Berehynia only intensifies and fosters women's "double burden" at home and at work. Some Ukrainian women even shoulder a "triple burden" when they have to find extra income by engaging in "shuttle business".

The Ukrainian government wants its female citizens to model themselves on Berehynia for several reasons. The fall in fertility and the sharp decrease in the young population is leading to an overall decline in population and thus may affect Ukraine's long-term development. Thus, the government urges Ukrainian women to bear more children for the sake of the nation. The government also encourages women to tolerate the poor economic circumstances in periods of transition by promoting Berehynia's self-sacrificing nature.

The model of Berehynia appeals to most Ukrainian women. She has become the role-model for many women. Many women hope to stay home and be "happy housewives", partly because of the job market. Women are unemployed, underpaid, and some of them are abused at work places. Therefore, it is not uncommon that many Ukrainian women hope to stay at home and fulfill the role of Berehynia.

Addressing women's issues is further complicated by the selective historical imagery of nation building. When Ukrainian male nation builders seek a role for women in nation building, nation builders look at the historical past for the sources of nation building, and there find the Cossacks. The Cossack experience provides a positive male tradition for the male nation builders. At the same, it also gives a negative tradition, because there was no place for women in the Cossack state.

Furthermore, nation builders and reformers consider gender equality to be a

minor concern during the heroic period of nation building, state building and economic reform. Women's questions will be dealt only after the Ukrainian nation is built, various reforms are implemented successfully, and the state is constructed. Nonetheless, these projects and reforms do not address gender issues and women's issues.

Women should enjoy the right to participate fully in both private and public spheres. It is the rights of citizens to engage in public activities, just as the Constitution of Ukraine guarantees. Democracy without the full participation of women is a contradiction in terms. Women's rights are also human rights and thus should be fully respected and protected.

II.Suffering: Hope for a Better Future?

It is interesting to compare the Asian economic miracle and the tremendous growth that the Soviet Union experienced in the 1950s. Paul Krugman believes that there was no Asian economic miracle. By comparing the growth in Asian countries and in the Soviet period, Krugman concludes that Asian people substituted present personal gains for future gains because the growth in both Asian countries and the Soviet Union was not marginal growth. In both cases, the present needs were sacrificed for the hope of a better future. Thus resources were re-invested in production instead of being consumed.¹ In other words, there was no real/marginal growth. For many Soviet people, they used to believe that if they worked, suffered and sacrificed in the present, it was for an idealized better future for their children, grandchildren and generations. Many Soviet people (particularly women) were eager to suffer because they believed that the next generation could

¹ Paul Krugman, "The Myth of Asia's Miracle", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 73, issue 6 (November/December 94), pp.62- 78.

enjoy a better life.² Unfortunately, many of them were disillusioned. They suffered and sacrificed, but their children and their grandchildren did not enjoy a better life. However, could Ukrainians, after the fall of the Soviet Union, still be persuaded to bear present sufferings in hope for a better future for their children and grandchildren?

Women are the big losers in transitional Ukraine. They are the first to lose their jobs and the last to get back to the job market. They are subject to abuses in the workplace, and subject to family violence too. Ironically, women are regarded as the “provokers” in these cases. Home provides no refuge, the law no protection, and the public no sympathy for women.

After all, the cult of Berehynia confines women to motherhood and domesticity, it repudiates further requests for women’s rights and protection, and it also intensifies and fosters women’s “double burden”. If Western feminism can do nothing constructive for the Ukrainian women, neither can the cult of Berehynia.

² Catherine Wanner, *The Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press) 1998, pp. 74.

Appendix



Figure 1: A Ukrainian stamp showing the trident [tryzub] the Cossack symbol. It is also the national symbol.



Figure 2: A Ukrainian stamp issued in 1991 celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Zaporizhzhian Sich.



Figure 3: 5 Hryvna bill showing the portrait of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, the Cossack leader.



Figure 4: 10 Hryvna bill showing the portrait of Ivan Mazepa, the Cossack leader.

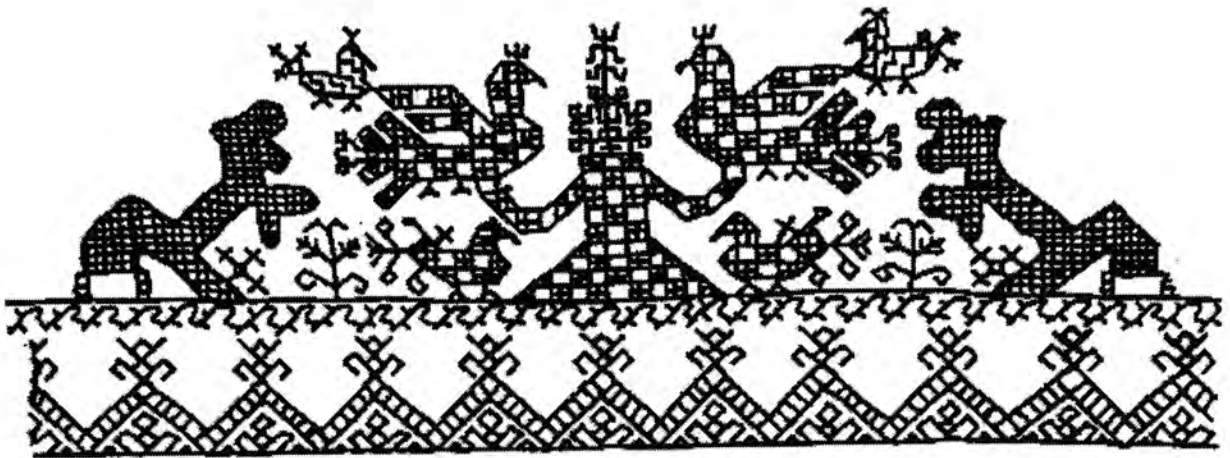


Figure 5: An embroidery design on shoulder of woman's shirt from Karhopil (Kargopol). According to the description of E.J. W. Barber, it shows three things. First, the center is the "Protectress" (Berehynia)(берегня) holding up birds and animals above her, and "a row of "mothers" (skirted women with arms bent down) beneath".¹ (After Durasov and Jakovleva 1990, pp.47)



Figure 6: One of the most common motifs used in Ukrainian embroideries. The motif represents fertility, mother/daughter relationship (mother on the top while the daughter is beneath).²

¹ E.J.W. Barber, "On the Origins of vily/rusalki". *Varia on the Indo-European Past: Papers in Memory of Marija Gimbuta, Journal of Indo-European Studies*, monograph 19 (1997), pp. 15. Also Marian J. Rubchuk, "In Search of a Model: Evolution of a Feminist Consciousness in Ukraine and Russia" in *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, vol.8, issue 2 (2000), p.149-152.

² Mary B. Kelly, "Living Textile Traditions of the Carpathians", in Linda Welters (ed.), *Folk Dress in Europe and Anatolia: Beliefs about Protection and Fertility* (Oxford: Berg) 1999, pp. 162.



Figure 7: A grandmother and her granddaughter dress in vests bearing a reinterpretation of the ancient image of Berehynia.³



Figure 8: A Ukrainian woman dresses in traditional Ukrainian folk costume.⁴

³ Mary B. Kelly, "Living Textile Traditions of the Carpathians", in Linda Welters (ed.), *Folk Dress in Europe and Anatolia: Beliefs about Protection and Fertility* (Oxford: Berg) 1999, pp. 165.

⁴ Vasyl Skurativskyi, *Berehynia* (Kyiv: Radianskyi Pysmennyk) 1987, pp. 9.



Figure 9: The cover of Vasyl Skurativskyi's book.



Figure 10: The gathering of three generations: grandmother, mother and granddaughters who are all making traditional handcrafts.⁵

⁵ Vasyl Skurativskyi, *Berehynia* (Kyiv: Radianskyi Pysmennyk) 1987, pp. 177.



Figure 11: A tapestry called "Berehynia" (1988) made by a male Ukrainian artist Stephan Hanzha.⁶ The tapestry reflects a modern reinterpretation of the image of the ancient goddess Berehynia.

⁶ See <http://www.artukraine.com/primitive/tapestry.htm>

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