

**THE UKRAINIAN LANGUAGE
AS THE VERNACULAR LANGUAGE OF RUS'**

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Throughout a long period of Russian–Ukrainian relations, a systematic policy aimed at denying the distinctiveness of the Ukrainian language and its historical development can be observed. In different historical periods, numerous prohibitions and restrictions were imposed on its use in the public sphere, accompanied by the discrediting of the Ukrainian-speaking population. In the context of the contemporary Russian–Ukrainian war, these narratives have gained renewed intensity, reinforcing information manipulation surrounding the language issue.

The relevance of this study is determined by the continued spread of pseudoscientific concepts according to which the Ukrainian language is allegedly an artificial construct, lacks an independent history, constitutes merely a dialect of Russian, or emerged as a result of the Polonization of the population of Ukraine. Such views were promoted by certain representatives of Russian historiography and philology, including M. Lomonosov [6], M. Pogodin [9], and O. Sobolevsky [10]. In contrast, the distinctiveness of the Ukrainian language and the continuity of its historical development have been convincingly demonstrated by A. Krymskyi [5], H. Pivtorak [7; 8], S. Smal-Stotskyi [14], K. Tyshchenko [12], Yu. Shevelov [13], and other prominent scholars.

According to the most conceptually elaborated periodization proposed by Yu. Shevelov, the history of the Ukrainian language comprises the following stages: Proto-Ukrainian (7th–11th centuries), Old Ukrainian (11th–14th centuries), Early Middle Ukrainian (15th–16th centuries), Middle Ukrainian (mid-16th – early 18th centuries), Late Middle Ukrainian (18th century), and Modern Ukrainian (from the late 18th century to the present) [13]. This approach is based on a comprehensive analysis of phonological, morphological, and lexical changes that attest to the distinct evolutionary trajectory of the Ukrainian linguistic system.

The language that in the period of Kyivan Rus' was referred to as "Rus'ian" functioned as the living vernacular of Kyiv, Chernihiv, Pereiaslav, Halych, and other centers of Rus'. At the same time, following the adoption

of Eastern Christianity, Church Slavonic came to occupy dominant positions in ecclesiastical and administrative spheres. Most chronicles, hagiographic texts, official documents, and monuments of written culture of the 10th–12th centuries were composed in this language. The Church Slavonic tradition was largely based on the Bulgarian recension, as also noted by Yu. Shevelov. Nevertheless, this literary language did not replace the vernacular foundation but rather coexisted with it in a state of constant interaction. The penetration of living vernacular elements into Church Slavonic texts is evidenced by numerous linguistic features recorded in manuscript sources, including the Ostromir Gospel (1057), the Dobrilo Gospel (1164), and other texts. Such features are often explained by the influence of the local linguistic environment on scribes.

Evidence of the functioning of the Ukrainian language in the popular milieu is also provided by the graffiti of Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv. S. O. Vysotskyi, who studied the corpus of inscriptions from the Cathedral of Saint Sophia in Kyiv dating from the 11th to the 17th centuries, identified linguistic features in the graffiti of the 11th–12th centuries that correlate with the Ukrainian linguistic tradition. This finding refutes claims that the Ukrainian language supposedly emerged only in the 13th–14th centuries from a “common ancestor.”

In particular, graffiti No. 108 records the text: “МАТН|НЄХОТАУН|ДѢТНУА|БѢЖА|ГЄТ (segmentation – *P. D.*)” [4, pp. 46–47], which can be reconstructed as: “Мати, не хочучи дитя, біжить геть...” (“Mother, not wishing for the child, ran away...”) (see Fig. 1).

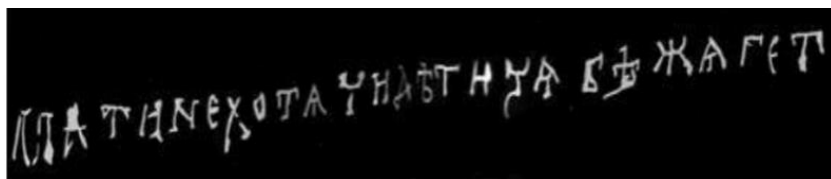


Fig. 1. Graffito No. 108 discovered in Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv [11]

This inscription of the 11th century, discovered on the walls of Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv, is rendered in modern Russian translation as: “Мать, не желая ребёнка, бежала прочь...”. We agree with the conclusion of S. O. Vysotskyi that this text contains linguistic features characteristic of the Ukrainian language.

Another inscription from the late 11th – early 12th century, also found in Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv, reads as follows: “О|ГОРС|ТОБѢ|АНДРОННУЄ|ОХЪ|ТОБѢ|НѢБОЖЄ (segmentation –

P. D.)” [3, p. 440], which can be reconstructed as: “О горе тобі, Андрониче, ох тобі, небоже...” (“Oh woe to you, Andronych, oh you poor fellow...”) (see Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Graffito No. 204 discovered in Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv [11].

In modern Russian translation, this text reads: “О горе тебе, Андроник, ой тебе, племянник...”. Thus, in this case as well, linguistic features characteristic of the Ukrainian tradition can be observed.

Therefore, the corpus of written monuments, graffiti, and linguistic reconstructions allows us to assert that by the 11th–12th centuries a complex of structural features characteristic of the Ukrainian language had already formed. Despite the long-term dominance of Church Slavonic in the official sphere, the vernacular foundation preserved its continuity and gradually expanded its functional scope. This process intensified particularly during the period of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, when the Rus’ian (Ukrainian) language acquired the status of a language of administration and state governance.

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БОРОТЬБА ЗА НАЦІОНАЛЬНУ ОСВІТУ ЯК ФОРМА ЗБЕРЕЖЕННЯ НАЦІОНАЛЬНОЇ САМОІДЕНТИЧНОСТІ: ГУЦУЛЬСЬКИЙ ДОСВІД

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На території Галицької Гуцульщини наприкінці ХІХ – на початку ХХ ст. тривала модернізація, що поступово змінювала світогляд українського населення. Важливим фактором цих трансформацій стала національно-просвітницька діяльність української інтелігенції.