University of Gdańsk history professor Magdalena Nowak has long been a fixture of broad studies on Polish-Ukrainian relations in the nineteenth and earliest decades of the twentieth century. As evidenced by her publications, her scholarly interests include the development of national consciousness of Poles and Ukrainians, the role and importance of religion in this process, the relationship between the Latin- and Greek-rite Catholic Churches, and especially the shaping of national identity by the metropolitan archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Andrei Sheptyts’kyi (1865-1944). Furthermore, the history of tourism and historical tourism constitute a separate area of her research. The high level of this research is determined by the consistent combination of traditional methods of historical research into primary sources with methodological reflection on the cultural conditions of each historical study and the cognitive limitations resulting from it.[1] Nowak’s achievements include her first monograph, Narodowcy i Ukraińcy: Narodowa Demokracja wobec mniejszości ukraińskiej w Polsce 1922-1939 (2007); a number of edited volumes, essays, biographical entries, and reviews; involvement in conferences; and participation in a couple of international scientific associations and editorial boards, which have given her the position of a recognized researcher among both Polish and Ukrainian academic historians.

Long-awaited, Nowak’s second monograph, awarded first prize by the University of Gdańsk Publishing House (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego) for the best scholarly book of 2018 and the Second-Degree Individual Award of the Head of the University of Gdańsk (2019), is a crowning achievement of her biographical studies on the figure of Sheptyts’kyi. However, the book cannot be described as a typical biography: this is a comprehensive study devoted to the complex issue of national identification of Metropolitan Sheptyts’kyi, covering the period from his birth in 1865 to the beginning of World War I in 1914, when tsarist authorities sent him deep into Russia. The turn of the twentieth century was a period of rapid civilizational changes in central and eastern Europe. The processes of industrialization, urbanization, and emancipation of serfs, as well as social changes, including dissemination of education, disintegration of state groups, democratization of political life, emergence of mass movements, and finally accumulation of national processes, were realized with all their strength. In eastern Galicia, where the archbishop of Lviv to-be was born and raised, these changes took place in diverse communities in terms of their ethnic, religious, and social
composition. According to Józef Chlebowczyk’s concept, one can describe this area as a transitional borderland, where related Slavic linguistic and ethnic groups had been peacefully meeting under Habsburg rule.[2] An increase of national aspirations among Habsburg subjects—the most important consequence of modernization in this region—diversified national attitudes, as in the case of Sheptyts’kyi across his family. Nowak’s book presents the particular stages of Sheptyts’kyi’s life in the context of transformation from a premodern society into modern national communities, and in this way it is a portrait not only of a man but also of a whole region during an extremely interesting time.

Emphasizing the importance of civilizational changes in the region where Sheptyts’kyi was raised corresponds to the methodological assumptions of the reviewed work. The conceptual frame of the book is based on a modernist concept of the nation; the author follows Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, and Miroslav Hroch in perceiving a nation as a product of modernity. Moreover, Nowak refers to the achievements of the Polish sociological school and uses the concept of “national identification,” understood according to Antonina Kłoskowska as the “entering of an individual into national culture, into a nation.”[3] The key component here is “entering” as a process of identification with a specific culture, which gradually leads to the conscious cultivation of its distinctiveness and includes various forms of declaration of belonging to a given group. While the “national identification” is an operative category in the book, in over six hundred pages, the author follows the path of Sheptyts’kyi, who grew up in a cultural environment of Polish gentry; however, at the age of twenty he defined himself as Ruthenian.

To accomplish this ambitious task, Nowak analyzed an impressive number of historical records from Poland, Ukraine, and Austria. The source material consists of primary sources accumulated in the Jagiellonian University Archives, Wroclaw University Archives, Vienna University Archive, Central State Historical Archive in Lviv, Austrian State Archives, and the Archives of the Southern Polish Provinces of the Jesus Society in Krakow. Secondly, she used the manuscripts from the Vasyl Stefanyk National Scientific Library of Ukraine in Lviv, the Jagiellonian Library, and the Ossoliński National Institute. She also explored the Aleksander Fredro Digital Archive and Museum and was able to access a copy of the diary of Józef Bilczewski, Latin-rite Catholic archbishop of Lviv (“Dzienniczek Sługi Bożego Józefa Bilczewskiego arcybiskupa lwowskiego obrządku łacińskiego, Lwów 1900-1921”). The memoirs, the memories, and the correspondence of Sheptyts’kyi’s and Fredro’s family, friends, and colleagues as well as sources regarding his activities (pastoral letters, documents, public speeches) are an important part of the research. The book also includes reports, meeting minutes, and official journals of such institutions as the Imperial and Royal St. Ann’s Gimnazjum (Grammar School), Imperial and Royal Franz Joseph’s Gimnazjum, National School Board, Diet of Galicia and Lodomeria, and Imperial Council. Nowak does not avoid using the press: she conducted a regular query of several Polish, Ukrainian, and Austrian titles. In terms of secondary sources, she took into consideration published monographs and articles devoted to the figure of Sheptyts’kyi and those that considered only a chosen issue or a specific time of his life. To create a wide background for her deliberations, Nowak referred to general works in the field of church history, the history of Ukraine, political life in Galicia, and the policies of Habsburg Vienna, and of course the key studies devoted to the process of shaping the Polish and Ukrainian national consciousness. When preparing the biographical sketches and explaining the meanings of the different terms, with her typical attention to detail, she made use of the Polish Biographical Dictionary and the Encyclopedia of Ukraine, among others. The source base constructed in this way
discloses the author’s intention to write a masterpiece about the spiritual leader of Ukrainians. And it is largely successful.

The book consists of seven chapters—the first four are arranged in chronological order and the last three are more thematic—introduction, and epilogue. A meticulously prepared, noteworthy personal index and discursive footnoting make the book meet the demanding standards for a scholarly monograph. Each chapter starts and finishes with complex articulated analysis, which makes the order of arguments clear and consistent. The style is readable and particular statements are documented with aptly assorted brilliant quotes.

Chapter 1 deals with the origins of the Sheptyts’kyi family. His father, Jan Kanty Sheptyts’kyi, belonged to the cultural formation *gente Ruthenus natione Polonus*. It was created by old Red Ruthenian stocks losing over time their original ethnic character and passing the *natio* level. To document the grounds for obtaining their high position in the social hierarchy of the Habsburg monarchy, they highlighted their importance in the political life of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, although the degree of polonization was variable and depended on the individual situation of each family. At the same time, these families kept the memory about their ethnicity in traditions, customs, language, or religion, which occurred under the element of *gens*. The Sheptyts’kyi family was an example of these types of families. In these families, the phenomenon of a “return to Russianness” (“the Renaissance of Russianness”) had been manifested in the second half of the nineteenth century. Zofia Fredro, the mother of the metropolitan to-be, represented Galician nobility; in her youth she spent a few years in western Europe, where she and her sons had met such celebrities as Adam Mickiewicz and other influential personages from the Czartoryski, Lubomirski, Sapieha, and Badeni families. It was her origins and property that significantly strengthened the position of the Sheptyts’kyi family after her marriage to Jan Kanty. This chapter corresponds with chapter 6, which is devoted to Sheptyts’kyi’s relationships with his immediate family, relatives, and friends in the period since his episcopal nomination. The fact that Nowak dedicates a separate chapter to her hero’s private relationships is in harmony with the aims set out in the introduction. It makes it possible for her to illustrate deeply the cultural environment Sheptyts’kyi came from and thus explain the background of his father’s objection against religious vocation and choice of Ruthenian/Ukrainian national identification. It also gives insight into the “inner reality” of the title character and his functioning at the juncture of two nations and rites (p. 16).

Chapter 2 goes through the period of Sheptyts’kyi’s secular education starting with home education, which was typical for Polish landed gentry, moving on to his secondary school years, and ending with his earning a doctoral degree in law. Nowak proves that the education of the metropolitan to-be proceeded in a patriotic and conservative environment dominated by Poles, practically without any Ruthenian/Ukrainian impact. Sheptyts’kyi was at the time more absorbed by his religious vocation than by the problem of national identification. Meanwhile, chapters 3, “Looking for the Path,” and 4, “Education and Religious Career,” constitute the essence of this study. In this part of the book, the progress toward Sheptyts’kyi’s decision to join the Basilian Order, meaning at the same time a change of rites, is subtly illustrated. Nowak recreates the political conditions of the Dobromil reform, thanks to which the doors of Uniate orders had opened to candidates (who had previously been) baptized in Latin rites. The choice of Sheptyts’kyi is discussed on several levels: as a personal spiritual struggle and his sense of mission, as a conflict of generations between the father and son, and as an element of the rivalry between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. Chapters 5 and 7
concern respectively Sheptyts'kyi's nominations in church and his activity in the political life in Galicia until 1914. Sheptyts'kyi’s church career from a monk to the metropolitan archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, with all the conditions for being nominated to the highest position among Greek Catholic clergy, is depicted in detail. Assuming this function, Sheptyts'kyi believed, as Nowak proves, that the problems of Ruthenian/Ukrainian people could be solved on the basis of the Catholic social teaching of Pope Leo XIII, and he wanted to take an active part in it. If, however, it turned out to be more complicated over time, he supported the Ruthenians/Ukrainians in their pursuit of national emancipation. The culmination of the adoption of the Ukrainian national perspective by Sheptyts'kyi was revealed in the memorandum of August 15, 1914, in which he postulated to separate the territory from Russia, where Ukrainian autonomy under the Habsburg protectorate would be established. Concluding, Nowak portrays Sheptyts'kyi as an outstanding personality living at the threshold of the modern world, who, despite being brought up and educated in the environment of Polish gentry, returned to his family's Ruthenian religion and traditions. If at the beginning of his adult life the conflict between two competing national identities in Galicia, blossoming Polish and germinating Ruthenian/Ukrainian, had for him in some measure secondary importance, he finally immersed himself in the Ruthenian/Ukrainian national community, adopting its values and affairs and embraced it as a spiritual leadership.

The clearly defined research problem has been completely solved, although the book leaves something to be desired. Such a broad approach to the national identification of Sheptyts'kyi in its own right raises further questions, especially about his behavior and choices during World War II. Paradoxically, Nowak, who has written an excellent book has contributed to this scarcity herself. Perhaps partial resignation from some of the expanded footnotes in favor of extending the time frame until the death of the metropolitan in 1944 would have shown his life in a whole perspective. It would have given insight into this stage of his life, when national identification was already expressed, as it were, in isolation from religion. It would probably answer what role Sheptyts'kyi’s national identification played in his commitment to the Ukrainian independence movement, how it affected his various decisions from this dramatic period, and to what extent it influenced his attitude toward the co-inhabitants of Galicia, in other words, Poles and Jews, as well as toward the aggressors, Germans and Soviets. A certain weakness in this context is also the superficial treatment of the Jewish thread and Sheptyts'kyi’s attitude toward anti-Semitism of his high school friends (including acts of aggression) and lecturers; explication on this point would be valuable in light of new discourse on Polish-Jewish relations.[5] Even though the book suffers from this flaw, its contribution to understanding the national processes in Galicia at the turn of the twentieth century remains indisputable. Indeed, its breadth and richness of source material as well as Nowak’s historiographical qualifications will make this book enter the canon of academic readings in the fields of the historical background of Polish-Ukrainian relations and the mutual penetration of influences between Roman and Greek rites of the Catholic Church. Undoubtedly, this is the most complete study devoted to the Metropolitan Archbishop Sheptyts'kyi, and it is to be hoped it will soon be translated into English and thus included in international scientific circulation.

Notes

[1]. Wojciech Wrzosek, O myśleniu historycznym (Bydgoszcz: Epigram, 2009), 15.

[2]. Józef Chlebowczyk, O prawie do bytu małych i młodych narodów: Kwestia narodowa i procesy


[5]. The most famous example of this discourse is a book (published after Nowak’s publication): Grzegorz Gauden, Lwów: Kres iluzji; Opowieść o pogromie listopadowym 1918 (Krakow: Universitas, 2019).

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