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**THE PUBLIC VILLAGE COMMUNITIES DURING THE PROCESS  
OF FORMING THE CIVIL SOCIETY (THE END OF THE XIX-th  
CENTURY – EARLY XX-th CENTURY)**

*- Abstract -*

This article analyses the main types of village public communities in Ukraine in the end of XIX – early XX that ran in the period of nascent public society in the Russian Empire. The specific character of their activity was examined. The process of forming such kind of communities is considered to be a component of all-Russian public statutory movement. The mechanism and main tendencies of their activity were pointed, the ways of communities' influence on the public, cultural, educational and the spiritual life of Ukrainian nation were discovered. The positive meaning of qualitative results of their work was accented. Especially in the branches of agriculture, improvement of the territories, organization of fire control, supporting of social wardship traditions, charity and enlightenment.

*Keywords:* Ukrainian peasantry, public community, civil society, village grouping, public organization, non-commercial community.

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The topic of the researches is the village public communities of the end of XIX – the early XX centuries. The urgency of it is caused by solving the problem of forming the state organizations in the process of civil society formation. From the theoretical methodological point of view the formation of voluntary state movement is concerned to the process of creation the basics of civil society in Russian Empire and especially in Ukraine.

In that period, Ukrainian peasantry revealed as an active participant of the new civil wave, such as city intelligentsia, lower-middle class citizens and toilers.

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All of them were struggling for accomplishment of their legal interests by activity in voluntary state communities. Due to the realizing the necessity and importance of their taking part in the process of changing, the peasants caused the creating of hundreds civic communities of different directions. The territorial scope, ways, measures and results of their activity is a real example for contemporary village public movement.

The rights to have a freedom in uniting in the Russian Empire existed as a law norm from the second part of XIX century. However, this right was colored in a new way on March 4, 1906<sup>1</sup>. We can agree with A. Tumanova that “The Rules of communities and unities” became “the notable step-up, being compared with the previous Russian legislative acts” as for the question and “being concluded according to the main principles of the law regulation that were taken from the works of western lawyers and legislative acts”<sup>2</sup>.

The statement ‘civil society’ is supposed to be a space between the individual human and the state, it is accordingly to the political and social-economic factors of that period. The components of such kind of process are the official statute public communities too. Their functioning took place within the common-Russian legislation and the activity character did not get any of Ukrainian specificity, to say nothing of some enlightenment organizations before 1917. At the same time, there was the progress of public organizations in Ukraine that was a part of Austro-Hungary Empire. These organizations’ aims, statute tasks and activity tendencies had some peculiarities.

This article aim is formulation of the main characteristics that determined forming and activity of the village public communities in Ukraine.

The separate branch of public communities appeared simultaneously to the process of institutionalization of the civic society. They were to represent the interests of different social groups; branches became an important cause for the formation of civil society. In the villages of Ukraine in XIX-XX centuries, some organizations started their activity. They were: agricultural communities, fire control organizations, unities for territory improvement, communities of soberness, the village branches of common-Russian unities, charity and enlightenment associations.

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<sup>1</sup> Справочная книжка об обществах и союзах / сост. В. И. Чарнолуцкий, СПб. , Тип. Б. В. Вольфа, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> Анастасия Туманова, Деятельность Министерства юстиции России по разработке законодательства об обществах и союзах в начале XX в, (Известия ВУЗов. Правоведение), № 6, 2002, p.196.

There is an open question of determining minimal amount of public communities in the country and definition of their relation criteria. The public movement is traditionally supposed to appear in the conditions of “an ample number” of private communities, not concerned to the state. The public organizations were the element of those movements. The statement “an ample number” does not have any criteria in the modern historiography; its meaning had some obscurity.

What kind of meaning should be the guideline for the scientists? Is it the presence of public community in every province, district or volost centers; maybe public communities that submitted in different fields of public life (from charity to the animal rights); or it was quantitative relation of the communities members to the common number of the country inhabitants. We confirm that the presence of agricultural community in every district and volost center (and a couple of public organizations) had been the minimal number that was necessary for an affirmation of the village voluntary statute movement existence. Moreover, the studies showed that the rates of enlightenment agricultural movement were lower than the rates of cooperative grouping in the same region. The charity, cultural-educational movement and fire control organizations had the same problem<sup>3</sup>.

One of the civil society forming and functioning principal is a fact of the dialogue between citizens, social elite, economic and political structures. Such kind of dialogue does not mean the coming transformation or assimilation of other side. Every member’s right for individual identity was an absolute. On the one hand, public organizations’ activity filled all empty spaces in the spheres that the state did not attend at all. On the other hand, they became a state ally and helped to fulfill all the personal interests and improve the situations in the localities.

Private and unprofitable organizations traditionally were called “the third sector” opposite the state and economic one. Their activity took place in the conditions of civil society. The permanent public movement appeared on the administrative-territorial level in Ukraine in the end of XIX – in the early XX centuries. It was consisted of separate and independent public organizations, but they did some kind of cooperation.

The present classification schemes of public unities in the modern historiography has some pros and cons, but supports the most optimal research of

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<sup>3</sup> Оксана Силка, Громадські об’єднання українського села наприкінці XIX – на початку XX ст., становлення та діяльність (на матеріалах Лівобережжя), Черкаси, 2015.

the statute public sector history and its village component<sup>4</sup>. The number of such kind of classifications helps the researchers to determine the role and place of public communities in the Ukrainians' social life. At the same time, the scientists are discussing of the necessity of creating universal classifications, the way to which is determined as a search common features in the multiplicity.

The village public communities' legal frameworks were based on the current legislation that supported opportunities of functioning the communities and regulated the most of their activities. The main document determining the right principals of organization and activity of village communities were "The temporary rules of the communities and unities" from March 4, 1906.

The document was supplemented with the list of other laws, directives, the Senate's explanations, the resolution of province and district power and other regulatory documents. All the village public unities in Ukraine before 1917 that legalized their right for grouping by the registration in the appropriate state body, were supported to be the official organizations. From the legal point of view, the communities were independent and autonomous structures. Village public unities have been created on the background of voluntary and conscious choice of a separate person. Appearance of such kind of communities we consider as a process that is characterized by protecting and realizing the peasants' individual interests.

Organizational backgrounds of the communities functioning were grounded on their statute documents. As a rule, the texts of "Typical Statutes" have been a base<sup>5</sup>. They were elaborated for all types of public organizations. At that, the legislation accepted registering individual "Statute" if its contents do not contradict the current rules. The urgency of "The Statute" was recognized during all the activity of the community; it was accepted to correct separate assets of the document on the special conditions (these are: extension of activity; creating the new structural subdivisions etc.). The norms and regulations of "The Statute" were mandatory for accomplishing by all the members categories: honorable and the actual.

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<sup>4</sup> Варфоломій Савчук, Громадсько-наукові об'єднання: процедури типологізації (Ейдос), Київ, Вип. 4, 2009, pp.153–164, Тетяна Слінько, Олександр Кушніренко, Конституційно-правовий статус об'єднань громадян в Україні, Харків, 1998; Лариса Лойко, Громадські організації етнічних менший України: природа, легітимність, діяльність, Київ, 2005, Валентина Кравчук. Взаємовідносини громадських організацій і держави в умовах формування громадянського суспільства в Україні (теоретико-правові аспекти), автореф, дис. ... канд. юрид. наук: 12.00.01, Київ, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Нормальный устав для местных сельскохозяйственных обществ (Список сельскохозяйственных обществ), 3-е изд., СПб., 1904, pp. XI–XIII; Нормальный устав сельских пожарных дружин: [утв. 5 авг. 1897 г.], Псков, 1897, 18 р. та інші.

The aim and task of the communities were determined in the statute document; annual reports (hand-written or printed) fixed their activity. The power controlled communities' keeping the statute. Every time when the meeting had to be held, the communities were to trouble about getting the special permission for it. It was necessary to point out the date, time and place of holding and to add the list of essential questions that should be solved. Public agents (as a rule these were district police officers) were bound to be present at the meetings and all kinds of communities' arrangements.

The main sources of revenue were the membership dues, the help of privies, incomes of organized arrangements and state subsidies. The majority of annual reports of village public communities showed their non-profitable type.

The social staff of statute communities was characterized by the different kinds of people: peasants, teachers, priesthood, noblemen, and merchants. There were no limits in the point of view of sexual causes: some women were seen between the members and even some of them were the heads of communities. The social staff of community was determined by its type, i.e. by its activity specific features.

The activity of village public communities have been done continually from the time of "The Statute" registration. The part of village communities had 10 years anniversary<sup>6</sup>. Even the First World War did not stop the activity of the majority village statute organizations; what's more, some new associations appeared in that period. They worked in the fields of wardship, charity and enlightenment. The February Revolution events of 1917 did not affect the decreasing of village communities number too. Nevertheless, just socio-political events of 1917-1921 caused the decline of village public communities and their real voluntary liquidation.

The legal platform of the village statute communities activity, financial conditions and the means for realization the aim, partial integration into the social structure of the village community are the reasons for affirming the presence of social institutes if civil society signs in the researched communities which process of formulating was pointed out in the early XX century. The activity of public communities including the ones that ran out on village territorial-administrative level, assisted the public society in Ukraine formulating; it helped to create, extend, consolidate and protect the space between the individual and power by means of individual forming, contribution to professionalism and cultivation civic obligations.

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<sup>6</sup> И. Пайчадзе, Охоньковская пожарная дружина (К 10-летию юбилею) (Пожарное дело), СПб., № 2, 1915, pp.48–51; Юбилейное собрание Борковского сельскохозяйственного общества (Труд), Зеньков, № 11, 1916, pp.3–4.

The state policy of village public communities depended on accordance of communities aim and tasks to their forms and directions of activity. The power tried to save the backgrounds of their socio-political systems in different ways, including control the communities functioning. In its turn the village communities existence set some limits to the state monopoly of public life organization, helped to combine interests of a peasant with interest of society.

Some communities were referred to the category of the public ones of the village territorial self-organizations. These were, instead of agrarian enlightenment direction, the territory improvement community and voluntary fire brigade. The results of research showed that the territory improvement community did not succeed in creating the widespread village system. However, qualitative indices of the statute fire-prevention movement resemble the agrarian enlightenment features.

The appearance of all-Russian communities village centers took place in the all-empire statute tradition. The activity of Humane Society and the Red Cross community (which were the biggest in number of braches) was confirmed in the territory of Ukraine. Owing to the vigorous activity of their members that was socially significant, it turned out well to save thousands of Ukrainian peasants' lives. After being dissolved by the Soviet Union power, those organizations adopted all the aims, principles and elements of these public communities and they were put into practice in the conditions of new policy and economics.

The communities of social wardship, charity and enlightenment were induced into the system of village public communities. This component of village statute space represented the clerical and secular communities of soberness, the centers of provincial and district charity communities, societies of help separate groups of population, cultural-educational unities, orphan public nursery etc. Those communities made a great contribution into the philanthropy, patronage and education.

Wardship and charity communities' efforts were aimed at different categories of people: children, injured men, refugees, mobilized soldiers' families. The First World War period increased the number of such category of communities. The war formed new opportunities for developing the public sphere. It created institutional space for consolidation the relation between active members of voluntary organizations and representatives of the state bodies. It was made by means of co-operative resources mobilization. The researched public organizations' activity complemented the state structures activity in the war period.

Some cultural-enlightenment organizations had a great importance in the village public communities system. The basic aim of their activity was improving

the educational level and general culture of peasants, the zeal of national consciousness, careful popularization of Ukrainian history, customs and traditions. The village communities' enlightenment and cultural activity should be examined in the context of the common tendency of Ukrainian educational movement of the end of XIX – the early XX centuries.

In 1917 there was a widespread system of volunteer statute public societies in Ukrainian villages. The number of the communities with the power and organs of self-government created the special social environment that was a necessary condition for the changes in the country. Ukrainian peasants caused creating the public organizations, using their own world-view, mentality, historical experience. Their active public position was determined not by only the need of agriculture, but the realizing the possibility of better life, freedom, environment, and culture. Village statute communities played an important role in the development of the public life sphere in the end of XIX – the early XX centuries, the result of their activity caused the expansion of peasants' horizon, stimulating the initiative.

Voluntary village public communities activity started the tradition of statute organizations existence in the area of Ukrainian village. It continues even in the early XXI century, but the territories are less than they were a hundred years ago.

Ukrainian village public organizations are an inalienable component of the common public communities system; they acted in the period in the end of XIX – the early XX centuries. Thereafter they were separate and important factor of social-economical processes and cultural-educational changes. Touching upon historical traditions gives us an opportunity to estimate it as its succession, the connection with economic and political structures (it was happening in the conditions of developing activity of the statute public communities in the end of XIX – the early XX centuries; especially their village segment). What's more, it gives a chance to find out common backgrounds that were the space for functioning not only Ukrainian and European communities, but also the world ones; it was an opportunity to realize in a new way the role and place of public organizations in a civilizational progress of Ukrainian society.