

Doctoral Dissertation

**Pre-History of National Identity Development in Poland:  
From the Standpoint of the First Religious Freedom Ever in Europe**

**(Summary)**

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The question of the relevance of national identity from the context of non-western national development has been inquired by the contemporary scholars (see Hroch 1985, Smith 2009) especially in the milieu and role of religion in construct national identity. This thesis concentrates mainly on the pre-modern period of Poland and its contribution in establishing first religious freedom in Europe, which was the outcome of a multi-religious and multi-ethnic mosaic of Poland. Pre-modern period of national identity was selected based on the works of Anthony D. Smith that described the nations, before their conception in modern terms, as *ethine*. Smith (2009) continues his discoursed about *ethine* as a social group sharing the same land and history but transmutes his term into *ethno-symbolism*. Symbolism emphasises the cultural heritage of each *ethine* as a vital element of its own identity.

Moreover, the reason to *dive* in this discourse about pre-modern scholarship in Poland was based on Miroslav Hroch's theories regarding the creation of smaller European nations (mainly Eastern European, but also including some Nordic states).

According to Hroch's (1985) theory of National development – *The ABC pattern of National Development* - can be divided into three consecutive steps:

- A. Period of scholarly interest
- B. Period of patriotic agitation
- C. The rise of a mass national movement

Hroch (1985, 22-24) for clarity of his argument had designated three fundamental phases of the national movement. The author believes that step A begins when the national revival is manifested by a group of individuals, in most cases intellectuals, researching language, culture, history of the oppressed nationality. Most of those individuals do not possess social or political influences and cannot organise any patriotic agitation. Mostly because of their isolation and lack of faith that it would have any purpose. Moreover, the national revival is driven by their patriotism of the home region and the intellectuals have a lust to obtain more knowledge about their nation.

In step B, the curiosity of a few individuals transforms. They do not have any more lack of purpose, and national identity becomes a discussion of a broader group of people. These groups begin to develop a reliable organisation foundation to begin agitation of their rights.

In step C, the masses of people understand and react to the patriotic impulses. The author states that these steps do not progress from A to B, and B to C smoothly. For step C to happen the fermentation-process of national consciousness (Hroch 1985, 23) is required. The success of fermentation-process is possible only when political, economic objectives are completed. The scholarly research that initiated step A is in step C expanded, but functions as much as scientific as national.

The same formula was (Hroch 1985), but by only applying it to the Polish National Development. Consequently, time frames of the ABC pattern by Hroch can be presented in this form:

- A. Skarga, Modrzewski were the scholars that initiated the scholarly discourse, about the need to conceive a collective identity for Polish People
- B. In the 18th and 19th century the works of Skarga and Modrzewski were used by national bards (Mickiewicz, Slowacki, Sienkiewicz) to kindle the awareness about Polish identity when Poland was divided and partitioned
- C. In the mid and late 19th century the Polish sentiment became on the rise, during the slow decay and collapse of the imperial powers (Austria-Hungary, Ottoman Empire) in Eastern Europe.

In the case of Poland from the pre-modern period, two scholars (Piotr Skarga and Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski) were selected that embodied the national identity formation struggle in the XVI Century. XVI Century was a pivotal moment when Poland had participated in political union with Grand Duchy of Lithuania and became a new political entity the *Commonwealth of Both Nations*. *Commonwealth of Both Nations* was a political, cultural and religious amalgamation of western European and eastern European elements. To accommodate and balance different ethnic and religious group, political change had to occur. Skarga and Modrzewski discussed different approaches to reform Poland and to make it more cohesive by strengthening its national ties.

This research attempts to find an interpretation of the Skarga's and Modrzewski's writings that would fit the religious transformation and introduction laws ensuring freedom of religion in the *Commonwealth of Both Nations*.