

Ethnic artistic tradition as the object of Ukrainian ethnology

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Abstract. The artistic component is a significant part of the ethnic tradition. However, the ethnic artistic tradition has not become active field of discussion in Ukrainian ethnology yet. The author offers her own concept of ethnic artistic tradition, based on empirical studies of the relatively young (just over 200 years) tradition of beaded decoration of the Ukrainian folk costume. The proposed concept takes into consideration the scientific achievements of the Ukrainian art criticism and ethnological sciences. The author of review article tries to activate discourse about ethnic artistic tradition. Such discourse can become interesting and productive area of modern ethnological studies, particularly in the context of «authorized heritage discourse» (AHD).

Keywords: Ethnic artistic tradition (EAT); passionary-creative potential; laws of tradition; phases of ethnic artistic tradition.

1. Outline the problem

Increasing globalization, wide-ranging dialogue between cultures, and rapid unification of the cultural and information space associated therewith, pose serious challenges and threats to the planet's ethnic mosaic. Analytical understanding of the past and present of each of the existing ethnic cultures and the search for effective measures for their preservation and development are relevant to the current tasks of modern ethnology.

The main focus of the proposed article is *ethnic artistic tradition* (EAT) as a component of ethnic tradition. Art, as a significant part of civilization experience, is being actively studied all over the world. In particular, many art criticism and ethnological works have been written in Ukraine about national peculiarities of different types of folk and professional art [Fedorchuk 2019]. The results of the studies show that many closely related spiritual and material

components of ethnic identity have been formed and established in art, in particular folk, as a widely available form of creative activity. At the same time, the view of ethnic artistic tradition as a subsystem of ethnic tradition has not yet been sufficiently formed.

The concept of «ethnic artistic tradition» may be of interest to researchers as «authorized heritage discourse» (AHD). Research of ethnic artistic tradition and popularization of the extracted knowledge can be an effective way to include heritage values in the communication process with the nation, which importance emphasizes Laurajane Smith [Smith 2011, 29].

2. Ethnic artistic tradition as an object of art studios

Developing of the theory of ethnic artistic tradition in Ukraine was started by art critics. Thus, Oleksandr Nayden in the monograph «The Ornament of the Ukrainian People's Painting» raised the question of the origins, causes of distribution and functions of the «tradition of wall painting in the villages of Ukraine» [Naiden 1989]. Studying one of the poorly researched morphematic traditions of Ukrainian folk art, the scientist outlined a number of problems: the causes of outbreaks and extinctions of «folk activity»; factors of localization of artistic tradition; the «collective personality» of the folk artist; the «collective time» of folk art; the ornamental affinity of different kinds of art etc. [Naiden 1989]. O. Nayden very accurately formulated problems of paramount importance of the theory of ethnic artistic tradition.

In 1997 another Ukrainian art critic Mykhailo Stankevych, published a research paper entitled «The Artistic Aspects of the Theory of Tradition» in the scientific journal *Ethnology Notebooks*. Later, this paper was edited and published by a scholar in a collection of selected works, «Authenticity of the Art: The Question of the Theory of Plastic Arts», entitled «The Artistic Aspects of the Theory of Tradition» [Stankevych 2004].

M. Stankevych began his scientific exploration of the ethnoartistic¹ tradition from a critical analysis of the statements of V. Chistov, S. Artunov, E. Markaryan and other soviet researchers of tradition. The scientist noted that the existing theoretical provisions about the «tradition» (despite relevant moments) do not meet all the criteria, parameters, characteristics of the «ethnoartistic tradition» [Stankevych 2004, 65–66]. Thus, M. Stankevych pointed to the need for a separate definition and clear delineation of the meanings and functions of the ethnoartistic tradition.

The scientist pondering over the concept of the «ethnoartistic tradition», introduced into the scientific lexicon of the Ukrainian researchers of ancient

¹ Stankevych used only the term «ethnoartistic tradition», without using the phrase «ethnic artistic tradition».

and contemporary art and crafts a number of terms and their author's interpretations. Basic in his theory were the terms: «ethnoartistic tradition», «morpheme tradition» (by types), «genre tradition» (by subtypes / genres of art), «local tradition» (by location) [Stankevych 2004, 72–73]. It should be noted that the term «ethnoartistic tradition» was interpreted by M. Stankevych as «a mechanism for the formation, translation and functioning of genre and local traditions» of folk art [Stankevych 2004, 81]. At the same time, in his studies, M. Stankevych touched upon the problem of ethnoartistic tradition in general – its folk and elite (professional) branches. In particular, the scientist posed the prerequisites for the emergence of the (morpheme or genre) ethnoartistic tradition; the peculiarities of its evolution; the phases of ethno artistic tradition and etc. The scientist developed these and other questions in the mentioned and a number of other works.

M. Stankevych was aware that a very wide range of issues in the essence of the new scientific category of Ukrainian art criticism needed further research and verification in the context of different morphemic traditions [Stankevych 2004, 81].

The author chose the ethnic artistic tradition of beaded decoration of the Ukrainian folk costume as the object of the research and verification of theoretical considerations of M. Stankevych. This is a relatively young tradition that is a genre component of the much older morphemic tradition of beaded products. It should be noted that the Ukrainian artistic tradition of beaded products has a long genesis.

It appeared in the X century as a cultural transfer of Byzantine (Christian) world, its spiritual and material achievement. For a long time tradition beaded products developed exclusively in the Ukrainian elite environment. Specifically, endowed with sacred meaning tiny pearls and beads (O.F – «artificial pearls») got the use in decorating church wares and princely clothing.

Only at the turn of XVIII–XIX centuries work with beads began to penetrate in the folk environment. It was a cultural transfer of Romantic Epoch, that has found a solid foundation in Ukraine – a long tradition of elite authentic beaded items.

Launched in the second half of the XVIII century in England and Germany romantic movement has become a factor of awakening national consciousness and national revival. Romantic Epoch largely linked to the beginning of the «Slavic revival» [Kyrchiv 2017, 778].

The tradition of the beaded decoration of the folk costume originated at the turn of the XVIII–XIX centuries and it has just over 200 years old. Due to the late origin of the EAT of the beaded decoration of the Ukrainian folk costume, scientists have at their disposal material sources of all stages of its development. The presence of sufficiently wide spectrum of material sources

at different times and from numerous centres is one of the prerequisites for building the most true reconstruction of all the phased processes that take place in the EAT system.

3. Ethnic artistic tradition from the point of view of the ethnologist

Theorizing around the problems of ethnic artistic tradition, O. Nayden and M. Stankevych used historical, comparative, complex and structural approaches that are familiar to Ukrainian arts criticism. We have decided to strengthen scientific studies with system-historical and system-resource approaches. We began to study the EAT as a system that runs the stages of historical development, on the basis of which its other paradigm is formed [Fedorchuk 2017, 573].

Analyzing the real sources (museum exhibits and field finds) by the method of comparative studies we were able to identify the technical, artistic, typological and stylistic transformation of folk art within 200 years. It was suggested to consider EAT contexts in three stages. Each stage has been described on the basis of generalized technological, typological, artistic and stylistic characteristics of folk art [Fedorchuk 2017, 573–574].

We also looked at the EAT as a system that has a certain energy resource. And because the system is a subsystem of EAT ethnic traditions, then it is logical to associate this resource with Passionarity. We have started from the passionary theory of ethnogenesis proposed by soviet ethnologist Lev Gumilyov [Gumilyov 2004]. For Gumilyov, «Passionarity» – is the energy that creates the desire (conscious or often unconscious) to activity without apparent reason [Gumilyov 2004, 8–10].

Concept «Passionarity» tested in the writings of Ukrainian anthropologists. In particular, we coordinated our EAT study with the scientific construction of the ethnogenesis of Ukrainians, developed by Academician Stepan Pavlyuk, who operates with synonymous terms: «passionarity», «energy of the nation», «energy resource of the nation» [Pavlyuk 2006, 31, 138, 155].

The author has 20 years of experience in the field, particularly in rural western regions of Ukraine. During the expeditions the level of intensity of folk art, that have occurred at different times and in different locuses, were revealed. We asked respondents of all ages: Do they remember beads decorated folk costume components as elements of ritual practices? When such practices were relevant? Whether such practices are relevant today? We also analyzed the approximate age and location of artifacts stored in the museums of Ukraine and abroad. The method of statistical comparison revealed that the scale and

quality of artistic practices is the changing nature indicating: inwardly EAT energy flashes and fading are observed [Fedorchuk 2017, 570–573].

The combination of system-historical and system-resource approaches has allowed us to move forward in understanding a number of key challenges, the first of which is the phenomenon of the birth of an ethnic artistic tradition.

4. Birth of an ethnic artistic tradition

According to M. Stankevych:

[...] The formation of a new ethnoartistic tradition (morpheme, genre, local) can only take place if the soil is prepared for it, when it meets the needs of the given environment of master-consumers. Often this soil is constituted by national-psychological, socio-economic, religious, political and other conditions [Stankevych 2004, 77].

We attribute the favorable terms listed by M. Stankevych to the social and personality-psychological factors of EAT formation [Fedorchuk 2018, 321–326], but the primary condition for the emergence of EAT is the raising of the level of passionarity.

The nature of «passionarity» L. Gumilyov sees in the same sources of energy. Volodymyr Vernadsky wrote about them, exploring the «living substance of the biosphere» [Gumilev 2004, 53]. Designing V. Vernadsky's reasoning on the ethnic system (as a subsystem of the Earth's biosphere) L. Gumilyov (after V. Vernadsky) named the sources of ethnos energy (passionarity): *energy of the Sun*, *energy of decay* inside the Earth of radioactive elements and *energy of space* [Gumilyov 2004, 43–45].

Our empirical studies leads to thought that an important source of passionarity, apart from the energy of the Sun, Earth, and space, is also *the energy of ethno-society* – a specific form of energy produced by periodic (political, cultural, economic) excitations within an ethnic society, that usually provoke interethnic conflicts. It is known that the chauvinistic manifestations of the ruling nation cause different forces (depending on the peculiarities of the ethnopsychics) of the outbreak of the national liberation struggle of the oppressed nation, which is in fact nothing more than evidence of the increase of passionarity in the ethnic system. Increasing passionarity due to the energy of the ethnosocium is, in fact, the effect of doubled passionarity: social excitement becomes an additional source of passionarity.

Social excitements has been particularly acute in the Ukrainian history because of the lack of national statehood. We explain this by the fact that «the lack of political self-defense has been reliably replaced by a spiritual and cultural resource» [Pavlyuk 2006, 180].

We trace the actual existence of such a resource and its role on the example of evolutionary changes in the EAT system. According to our observations, the rise of passionarity (on the background of social excitement) can cause the emergence of new or actualization of already existing morpheme and genre artistic traditions. In particular, at the end of the XVIII-th – the beginning of the XIX-th centuries² (in time of the «Slavic revival»), at least three new artistic traditions were born almost synchronously in Ukraine: paper cutting «vytynanka» (new morpheme) [Stankevych 1986, 13], folk painting on glass (genre component of painting) [Shpak 2012, 552] and, the beaded decoration of the folk costume (genre component of beaded products) [Fedorchuk 2017, 570]. The link between passionarity and evolutionary processes within the EAT is also confirmed by the synchronous actualizing of existing morpheme and genre artistic traditions in the 1920s and 1940s during the fierce national liberation struggles of the Ukrainian people for their independence.

Therefore, our observations indicate that all processes within the ethnic artistic tradition, as a subsystem of ethnic tradition, depends on the passionarity. Different levels of passionarity cause different levels of passionary-creative potential of EAT³. Depending on passionary-creative potential, EAT may be in one of the phases: *birth, primary development, creative exaltation, reverberation, actualization* [Fedorchuk 2017, 570]. In each phase, different qualitative changes (displayed in phase names) occur within the EAT system.

Thus, the rise of passionarity can trigger the birth of a new morpheme or genre artistic tradition. But the rise of passionarity is by no means the only prerequisite for the birth of a new morpheme or genre EAT. As O. Nayden rightly believes, the birth of the new, as well as the actualization of the old, EAT occurs only there and when such a tradition begins to fulfill certain social demands [Nayden 1989, 14]. M. Stankevych believes that the emergence of EAT is predetermined by the needs of master craftsmen and consumers. It is the same opinion, but in other words [Stankevych 2004, 77]. In addition to public inquiries, a number of favorable factors and phenomena play an important role in the birth of the new tradition, each of which merits separate research [Fedorchuk 2018].

² It was a period of when the economic oppression of the Ukrainian peasants was particularly aggravated as a result of the redistribution of political power: Western Ukraine was under increased oppression by the Austrian monarchy and Polish, Hungarian, Ukrainian landowners; and Central Ukraine – under the imperial orders of the Russian monarchy, which finally eliminated the Cossacks.

³ Passionary-creative potential is a conditional indicator of EAT activity. The level of passionary-creative potential is higher as the higher is the total index of the number of centres and masters, the level of passionarity (activity) of folk masters, the level of creativity of their artistic ideas, the variety of household types of artistic products, the level of demand for such products.

However, that's not all. Each system is an integrity that functions, and evolves through certain (specific) laws. Therefore, the emergence and successful evolution of a tradition are possible if the bearers of the tradition intuitively (in most cases) or consciously obey such laws.

5. Basic laws of ethnic artistic tradition

Through empirical exploration and theoretical reasoning, a comparative analysis of evolutionary changes (development of technology, typology, and artistic style) [Fedorchuk 2017, 573–576] has made it clear that the EAT system is based mainly on five laws:

The Law of Needs of changes – changes in the EAT system are necessary and inevitable. The artistic tradition is transformed for the sake of preservation. Changes are laid in the mechanism of its preservation by the system itself.

The law of Inheritance of ethnic archetypes and stereotypes– the content of EAT is made up of inherited archetypes and stereotypes that evolve with tradition. Tradition is a system in which the transmission of artistic experience formed over the centuries from generation to generation occurs.

The Law of Interaction and Relationship – the EAT is influenced by other EATs, which is a natural result of the close interconnections between traditions. Interactions and relationships are well-tracked in temporal, spatial (between ethnicities, artistic areas and local centres) and morphemic (between different types of art) dimensions.

The Law of Complimentary⁴ selection – the development of EAT is based on a subconscious sense of «own». Artistic paradigms always «grow» on the basis of their time and their centre. Innovations that do not stand the trial for complementarity, do not fit into the intuitive vision-sense of the authentic paradigm, are rejected by the EAT as inappropriate.

The Law of Periodic Actualization – a necessary condition for the successful evolution of the EAT is its periodic actualization. Periodically, as a phenomenon of time, the actualization of artistic heritage initiates the emergence of innovations that lead to the transformation of artistic archetypes and stereotypes.

⁴ Complimentarity (positive or negative) which is a term introduced by L. Gumilyov – a sense of subconscious mutual sympathy (antipathy) between people, which in ethnic systems defines into «one's own» and «another's».

6. Conclusions and prospects for further research

Thus, the ethnic artistic tradition is an organic part of the ethnic tradition, open to influences at the chronological, territorial and inter-morphic levels, an system aimed at creating, selectively assimilating, preserving, transmitting and developing the artistic experience of the ethnic group. The driving force behind this important part of the ethnic system is the energy of ethnos (passionarity), which can increase its strength due to the energy of the ethnosocium, which periodically increases during times of social excitement. The oscillation of passionarity causes the vibrations of the passionarity-creative potential of EAT. Depending on the level of passionarity-creative potential, EAT can be in different qualitative phases: birth, primary development, creative exaltation, reverb, actualization. EAT lives by its specific laws: Needs of changes, Inheritance of ethnic archetypes and stereotypes, Interaction and Relationship, Complimentary selection, Periodic Actualization and has its own special phenomena.

Every morphemic or genre ethnic artistic tradition, especially one that emerges, and its cultural heritage is an important resource for the ethnic identification of modern society, and therefore an important part of its national security⁵.

The author sees prospects of further researches in the study of EAT of beaded decoration of the Ukrainian folk costume in the European context, as a Western European cultural transfer of Romantic Epoch that under the action of symbolic senses of ethnic folk culture (accordingly to The Law of Complimentary selection) acquired uniqueness and got the Ukrainian coloring.

Author treats as promising next areas of research in ethnology: examination of the basic ideas of the proposed concept in the context of different artistic traditions; current trends and future foresight studies of different morphemic and genre ethnic artistic traditions; finding the answer to the question of why are some traditions successfully developing and others disappear?

Particularly interesting is the last question. Tradition researchers, according to the author, should search for the mentioned answer, using authorized heritage discourse (AHD). At the same time, AHD researchers may find notion of a «modern ethnic artistic tradition» as a system in which cultural heritage has no interruption with modernity interesting for their further works.

⁵ The relationship between ethnic artistic tradition, cultural heritage and national security are well understood to postcolonial nations. In 2014 Russia (hoping to regain its political influence on the post-soviet space) intensified propaganda and started a real war against Ukraine, taking away her right to national independence and denying the existence of independent cultural heritage.

List of abbreviations :

EAT – ethnic artistic tradition

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8. Illustrations



Ill. 1. Photo of festively dressed children. End of the XIX century, Easter at the vil. Tyshkivtsi, Horodenkivskiyi district / ethnographic area of Pokuttya. The Ethnology Institute of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Library Photography Collection № 11279



Ill. 2. Photo of the newlyweds. Middle of the XX century, Ukraine, Gorodenkivskiyi district of Ivano-Frankivsk region / ethnographic area of Pokuttya. Hutsulshchyna and Pokuttya Folk Art Museum after Yosafat Kobrynsky. Photography Collection № 128



Ill. 3. Participant of the Institute of Ethnology of NASU expedition – O. Kozakevich in a contemporary beaded shirt. Vil. Stari Kutu, Kosiv district of Ivano-Frankivsk region, Ukraine / ethnographic area of Pokutia. Expedition materials of O. Fedorchuk, June 22, 2008



Ill. 4. Girl in a contemporary folk clothing from the vil. Pidvysoke, Snyatyn district of Ivano-Frankivsk region, Ukraine / ethnographic area of Pokuttya. Expedition materials of O. Fedorchuk, July 24, 2015



Ill. 5. Hanna Didushko. The contemporary girl's headdress «bereh» (from Ukrainian *берег*, literally «edge, coast»). Vil. Pidvysoke, Snyatyn district of Ivano-Frankivsk region / ethnographic area of Pokuttya. Expedition materials of O. Fedorchuk, July 24, 2015

