

From Ethnography to Ethnology to Anthropology

The “quiet revolutions” within
the Ukrainian Folk Studies during
the 20th and 21st centuries

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Abstract. Tracing the history of folk studies in Ukraine during the 20th and 21st centuries, one can notice multiple changes in the naming of scientific disciplines: ethnography, ethnology, anthropology. It was neither a mechanical nor an aesthetic step: it was due to deep crises in the humanities and, consequently, to academic transformation processes. The transition from the self-name “ethnographer” to “ethnologist” took place in Ukraine in the 1990s and marked a break with the Soviet scientific methodology. The crisis in the Ukrainian ethnology in 2010s led to the emergence of a new scientific discipline: anthropology. Both events took the form of a “quiet revolution”. This can be explained by the lack of appropriate professional education: in Soviet times, neither ethnographers nor ethnologists were trained in Ukraine, and today there is no specialization as anthropologist in Ukrainian education. That is why new specialists appeared as a result of self-education and retraining from other scientific fields. This, in turn, led to a certain eclecticism of the research methodology in Ukraine.

Keywords: folk studies, methodology, ethnology, ethnography, anthropology, Ukraine.

When tracing back the development of the Ukrainian folk and historical-cultural studies during the 20th and 21st centuries, one would easily notice that they displayed the general tendencies of the world academic studies of the period. Among those tendencies were: either perfection or loss of certain research methods; technical and technological innovations; shifting from ideological engagement toward disengagement; reorientation of the

research priorities; rethinking of the past; birth and death of various academic institutions, schools, ideas. Apart from that, one cannot but notice the fact that Ukrainian scholars changed the name of their discipline several times: from an ethnography to ethnology, to anthropology. It happened for the first time in the 1990s, and the second time, in the 2010s. In Ukraine, such sensitive events of the academic life happened so calmly that they could be called the “quiet terminological revolutions”. They took place relatively recently although they should have happened much earlier, at least one of them. The reason for that lies not only in the history of Ukrainian ethnography, ethnology, and anthropology of the 20th century, but also in the hard ways the discipline was getting rid of the nets of the colonial and totalitarian science.

The relationship and correlation between ethnography, ethnology, folklore, anthropology has been among academic highlights at least since the end of 19th century, and interest to this subject matter doesn't fade [Lévi-Strauss 1963, 354–355; Stocking 1984; Schippers 1991; Vermeulen 1995; Urry 2006; Safonik 2009; Guadalupe and Sánchez-Carretero 2013].

It's a known fact that such academic disciplines as folklore, ethnography, and ethnology were heavily politically charged during the 20th century. The official Soviet discourse was trying to keep balance between mandatory academic studying of cultures of the USSR peoples and studying them very cautiously, without fanaticism. The focus of those studies was preferably on rural contexts, and research was based on fieldwork (including observation, interviewing and description). It's also good point to remind the Lévi-Strauss's classical division between ethnography, ethnology, and anthropology. “Preference for one or another of these only means that attention is concentrated on one type of research, which can never exclude the other two” [Lévi-Strauss 1963, 356], anthropology, as for him, plays a role of theory. What about the difference between Kyiv-based ethnographic school and Moscow-based ethnology research center? The latter played a role of ethnic theory developer and used to pursuit political aims.

Here is one example: in the Soviet Union, any specialist studying folk culture could be called an *ethnographer*, whether he worked in Moscow, Leningrad, capitals of other Soviet republics or in regional centres. A title of an *ethnologist*, on the other hand, was a privileged one. It could be applied only to the representatives of the Moscow and Leningrad schools where various theories were forged and new ideas created. That title was honorific and it provided the right to research not only about village pottery, embroidery designs and folk dances but also such serious academic topics as ethnic processes, identity, self-awareness. The “elitism” of arm-chair researches comparatively to field-workers is well known in anthropology since Victorian times, but in Soviet Union it had also political and ideological sense: ethnic issues were considered to be “slippery”.

That is to say that the Soviet ethnologists occupied a higher position than ethnographers. That was a prestigious caste of the metropolitan researchers. The difficult correlation between metropolitan and peripheral discourses (in terms of anthropology) has been raised in academic circles [Stocking 1984, 5]; whilst in the former Soviet Union, and in its outskirts, Ukraine included, the figure of ethnologists as historians, the theory of folk culture and of ethnic processes began to appear only towards the end of the Soviet era, in the late 1980s. They got official status in terms of name and institution right after the fall of the USSR.

Now let's move to the political meaning of the word *anthropologist*, by which I mean cultural and social anthropology, not physical one. During the Soviet times, calling oneself an anthropologist was out of the question for the ideological reasons, since anthropology was a bourgeois – that is alien – discipline. By the way, Kateryna Hrushevska could be called the founder of the social-cultural anthropology in Ukraine. She was a daughter of the most prominent Ukrainian historian, Mykhailo Hrushevskiy. During the Soviet times, his name could only be whispered since he was the worst enemy – the greatest representative of the bourgeois-nationalist science, as well as one of the leaders of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UPR) during 1917-1921. As for Kateryna Hrushevska, she had perished in one of the *gulag* forced labour camps [Matiash 2002]. If not for her untimely death due to the Stalinist repressions – by the way, many ethnographers became victims of the political purges during the 1930s – and if not for the hostile attitude of the Soviet authorities toward the social and cultural anthropology, she could have been capable of creating her own solid anthropological school in Ukraine, with its own disciples, progressive works, and new academic institutions.

After providing the political underpinning of the folk studies in the USSR, I will now turn to a short description of history of the Ukrainian ethnography, ethnology, anthropology.

According to the calendar, the 20th century started on January 1, 1900 but the academic development has its own predispositions. We can say that Ukrainian scholars parted from 19th century and from what they saw as the old-fashioned science, only in the 1920s. Those were the years of real academic boom in Ukraine. It was happening in the background of the processes of national rebirth, Ukrainization, and wave of literary and musical creativity. The 1920s were the first “golden age” in history of the Ukrainian ethnological discipline during which a good quality methodology leap took place. At the same time, the fieldwork methods were preserved and enriched. Also, the theoretical-analytical level of writing improved due to studying the experience of other countries and Ukraine's own original developments.

In 1921, the Ethnographic Commission was created in the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences (starting from 1921, it was called the All-Ukrainian

Academy of Sciences). The Commission was first headed by academician A. Loboda, a prominent Ukrainian scholar, and from 1927, it was headed by V. Petrov [S.a. 1925, 90]. As an academic institution, the Ethnographic Commission has hugely impacted the history of Ukrainian ethnography and folklore. It initiated and chaired the movement of gathering folkloric-ethnographic data all over Ukraine which was a part of the Soviet Union at that time [Muzychenko 1986].

There was also a methodological break-through in the history of discipline. The Ethnographic Commission did not have sufficient funds for expeditions on all the territories of Ukraine, so it chose the correspondence method of data collection as the main one. It means that a scholar would create a methodology for her/his research such as questionnaires, programs, recommendations, but those who would collect the actual data were not scholars [S.a.1925, 92-93]. They could be school teachers, graduate or postgraduate students, and sometimes even partially literate people. The results were published in the following scholarly journals: *The Ethnographic Herald*, *The Bulletin of the Ethnographic Commission*, and *Notes on Studying the Trade Unions* [Hurzhiy, Parakhina 2004]. It is worth mentioning that the correspondence method is known in British anthropology since Victorian times when two figures - fieldwork researcher and theoretician' - were brought together. In Ukraine this method turned to be short-lived and situational. And yet it was hugely effective, both in terms of getting the source materials and from the scholarly point of view.

During the 1920s, several more institutions were created within the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. For example, *The Cabinet of Primitive Culture and Folk Arts*; *The Khvedir Vovk Cabinet of Anthropology and Ethnography*; *The Cabinet of Music Ethnography*; *The Committee on Studying the Customary Law*; *The Committee on Local History* (it contained an Ethnographic section); *The All-Ukrainian Ethnographic Society*. [Polons'ka-Vasylenko 1955, 31-32; 36-37]. The following journals were published: *Prehistoric Society and Its Remnants in Ukraine*; *The Ethnographic Herald of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences*; *Notes on Ethnology*; *Notes on Ukrainian Ethnology*; *Notes on Studying Customary Law*, and so on.

The All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences carried out separate expeditions - that is group research fieldworks - on a much smaller scale yet on a much more qualified level. Thus, A. Onyshchuk, N. Zahlada, P. Demuts'kyi, Iu. Pavlovykh with others - who were all the employees of the Khvedir Vovk Cabinet of Anthropology - researched a number of villages in the Kyiv, Volyn, and Poltava regions [Zahlada 2001].

Speaking about the folkloric-ethnographic institutions of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in the 1920s-1930s, it is worth mentioning that it

was perhaps the most distinguished scientific school of ethnography and ethnology in Ukrainian history.

The above mentioned Kateryna Hrushevska was, on the one hand, an imminent part of that school. On the other hand, she somewhat transcended the frames of the purely ethnographic discourse. And by doing so, she brought over a powerful anthropological stream into the existing ethnic studies. She was a highly educated daughter of a professor and was fluent in several Western European languages. So, she was not only familiar with the achievements of the European and North American anthropology of her time, but she also closely collaborated with academic institutions. For example, Ms. Hrushevska was working on a joint project with Charles Gabriel Seligman from *The Royal Anthropological Institute* of Great Britain and Ireland. And Seligman was a teacher of such prominent anthropologists as B. Malinowski and E. Evans-Pritchard [Shevchuk 2016, 5-7; Stavys'tka 2016, 51-54].

The World War II slowed the scientific progress not only in Ukraine but throughout Europe. Thus, when Maksym Ryl'sky - a classical author in Ukrainian literature, public figure, cultural figure, and scholar - became the Director of the Institute of Folk Creativity and Arts under the Ukrainian SSR Academy of Sciences in 1942, there was a desert in place of ethnography and folkloristics¹. One could not find either scholars or published works to refer to - almost all of them were forbidden. Thus, Mr. Rylsky had to break new ground starting from scratch. He actually left a deep mark in Ukrainian ethnic studies primarily as an academic organizer and creator of a new school [Ruda 2017, 5-9]. The 1940s and the first half of 1950s was a very complicated period in the history of our country - the so-called refined Stalinism. At the beginning, there was no talk about some great achievements or ambitious plans. The main task for both ethnography and folkloristics was mere survival.

Maksym Rylsky created a new institution on a burned out academic field through his own unquestionable authority. He secured its funding and was creating ever new academic subdivisions. He reintroduced the practice of fieldwork (both full expeditions and business trips) [Stel'makh 1959; Kuveniova 1960], which were, by inertia, financed quite nicely till the very end of the Soviet era. The Institute preserved the old archives of the previous institutions such as the Ethnographic Commission of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences and so on. Those archives were enriched during the Soviet times with the materials of the numerous fieldwork expeditions, both group and individual ones. Those are, without a doubt, the richest folkloric-

¹ The Institute changed its name in 1944 to the Institute of Art Studies, Folklore, and Ethnography under the Ukrainian SSR Academy of Sciences and yet again later it was renamed into the Maksym Rylsky Institute of Art Studies, Ethnology, and Folkloristics under the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

ethnographic archives nowadays. Unfortunately, they are not open for the public.

The official journal of the Institute of Art Studies, Folkloristic and Ethnography became Folk Arts and Ethnography. For nearly 50 years the Institute of Art Studies, Folkloristic and Ethnography had a monopoly in Ukraine for studying folk culture. In the same way, the Miklukho-Maklai Institute of Ethnography in Moscow (headed by Iu. Bromlei) had a monopoly within the Soviet Union, and all the small, insignificant, and peripheral academic satellites revolved around it. The Ukrainian Institute of Art Studies, Folkloristics and Ethnography was one of those satellites.

The peripheral nature of institutions revealed itself in the absence of specialized education. The Academic Councils granting academic degrees in ethnography and folkloristics resided in Moscow, Leningrad, and Minsk. Departments of Ethnography were non-existent in Ukraine, not to mention Departments of Ethnology or Anthropology. A person with higher education could become an ethnographer by getting professional knowledge and skills from her/his colleagues while already working at an institution. The field of folklorists got a bit luckier during the Soviet times, for the specialized departments as well as the yearly summer fieldworks for students were absolutely legal.

While wrapping up the analysis of this stage it is worth mentioning that the ethnographic museums were the pillars of ethnographic discipline at that time. The main one was the Museum of Folk Ethnography and Everyday Culture in the town of Pyrohovo. A branch of the Institute of Art Studies, Folkloristics and Ethnography was created in 1982, in Lviv, and it was based on the Ethnographic Museum. After Ukraine gained independence, the Lviv branch of the Institute of Art Studies, Folkloristics and Ethnography became a separate academic institution called the Institute of Folk Studies under National Academy of Sciences and was headed by S. Pavliuk. It was seriously rivalling with Kyiv in, among other things, researching theoretical aspects of ethnology. The main journal of the Institute of Folk Studies is *The Folk Studies Notebooks*.

At the end of my analysis of the Soviet period in history of Ukrainian folk studies it is worth concluding that, despite everything, it was an academic school. Yes, it was peripheral and it depended on the “centre”, and yes, it was ideologically intimidated. Still, despite its very little human resources, that academic school withstood the seige of a discriminated and humiliated discipline for over 50 years. It even got incredibly successful in one particular sector, namely fieldwork research. From today’s point of view, the fieldwork training of the Soviet Ukrainian folklorists and ethnographers was outstanding.

Ukraine won its independence in 1991 and that opened a gate for Ukrainian scholars who came to work in their specialties while getting rid of complexes of periphery and inferiority, as well as ideologization, paternalism, and other remnants of the totalitarian system. The era of the Soviet Ukrainian ethnography ended and the era of Ukrainian ethnography started.

The 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s was the so-called “silver age” of the ethnology scholarship in Ukraine. Prohibitions on research topics related to the Ukrainian identity were lifted. It was officially allowed to undertake theoretical research such as ethnogenesis of Ukrainians. Ethnic processes, assimilation, acculturation of Ukrainians within the empires and other topics were also researched. Not only did the academic discipline change its name from ethnography to ethnology but it also initiated new topics of research and introduced the specialized education. The Kyiv, Odesa, Lviv, Chernivtsi, and Vinnytsia universities housed the ethnology departments at their history faculties. Over 20 years, hundreds of specialists graduated from those departments. The Academic Councils were created for defence of dissertations on ethnology, and dozens of dissertations were defended. New academic periodicals were published, for instance *Ethnic History of the European Nations*. New institutions were created, for example: the National Centre of Folk Culture at the Ivan Honchar Museum; the State Academic Centre for Cultural Heritage Defence from Technological Catastrophes (Folk Culture of the Chernobyl Zone).

Now I would like to draw special attention to the question of why the switch of the self-name, from ethnographer to ethnologist, happened precisely in the 1990s.

It is a common fact that the term “ethnography” means a fieldwork method in the North American academic tradition. This method uses its immanent instruments such as questionnaires, direct or indirect observations. The sociologists and anthropologists in the USA and Canada use the word “ethnography” precisely in this meaning. In Ukraine - just as earlier in the Russian Empire and then in the Soviet Union - ethnography is an applied discipline studying non-verbal types of folk life, traditional (i.e., village) material and spiritual culture.

In the 1990s, after the Ukrainian independence, it was no longer fashionable to be an ethnographer. Ethnographers started turning into ethnologists in mass. And that was basically the first “quiet revolution” that demonstrated the departure from the old Soviet school.

The “silver age” in the history of the Ukrainian ethnic studies could have become the second “golden age” if it could have happened at the same time as the Russian one did, namely two decades prior to that. In reality, during the 1990s-2000s the old, late Soviet era, theories were exploited in the Ukrainian ethnologic discourse. Among those were: the “Slavic antiquities”

of the Moscow ethnolinguistic school (N. Tolstoy); “the theory of the main myth” of V. Toporov and Viach. Vs. Ivanov. Even Ukrainian studies of subcultures, gender problematics, ethnic processes, and theories of ethnicity were also based on the Russian developments that were 20-30 years old by that time. Ethnologists did not know foreign languages and thus were unfamiliar with the achievements of Western academy. Therefore, they mainly used the Russian translations of the old Western theories, which were long obsolete and mattered only as phenomena in the history of the discipline. Ukrainian scholars often swamped into mythicization and authorial theories of ethnogenesis that were not productive. The crisis of the Ukrainian ethnology during the 2010s was accompanied by the overproduction of ethnologists. They could not find jobs after graduating from universities because there was no demand for their specialty in the society. The critical state of affairs was further intensified by the inability to do the fieldwork research, go to expeditions due to the lack of the state funding as well as absence of academic funds or grants. The best academic works were written with the help of pure enthusiasm and their authors went “to the field” to collect data using their personal savings. Because of all of this, the very notion of ethnology and ethnologist got devalued.

It is not surprising therefore that the second “quiet revolution” took place in Ukraine just like it happened prior in the Baltic countries, Russia and other countries of the former “Socialist camp”. Now the ethnologists started changing their names or their qualifications to that of anthropologists. In its essence, this was an academic strategy to get recognition in a national and international free academic market. In 2010s, the burning desire of a group of ethnologists to call themselves anthropologists also could be defined as a form of the post-modernism rebellion within the academy [Hrymych 2018, 6-37]. The change of their own titles could have been interpreted as schism or demonstrative departure from the academic circle of ethnologists to whom they did not want to belong to and with whom they did not want to identify. But in fact, there was nothing aggressive in the behavior of the “dissenters” and “rebels”. They were still friends with their colleague ethnologists, and collaborated with them on projects, which were quite eclectic at times. That is why this process is called the “quiet revolution” happening during the crisis in the ethnology discipline. By the way, the most progressive wing of ethnologists considers it reasonable to return back to the name of “ethnographer” [Boriak 2016], especially since nowadays it has a higher status than “ethnologist”. The reason for that is that qualitative methods of research are now important everywhere in the world. The modern “Grounded Theory” is based on the harmonious unity of quantitative and qualitative methods [Strauss, Corbin 1990].

Transferring from ethnology to anthropology in Ukraine was not mechanical or decorative. Not only stormy development of new technologies (internet

being one of them), but also learning foreign languages, which enabled access to new anthropological data, research instruments and Western academic experience, as well as open borders that provided possibility to move freely around the world - all that inspired Ukrainian scholars to write good quality anthropological texts.

I mentioned above the term “eclectic” while describing the present-day situation in the Ukrainian ethnological-anthropological scholarship. An example would be the Division of Social Anthropology at the Institute of Folk Studies under National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. The Division includes different researchers who are sociologists, ethnologists, and folklorists in training: O. Kis, I. Markov, O. Hodovanska, M. Maierchuk, D. Sudyn, O. Kuzmenko and others. The research topics they undertake revolve around oral history, gender studies, and migration. Another example would be the Kyiv-based anthropology centre called The Centre for Applied Anthropology. It’s been a community organization since 2017 and it includes those anthropologists who changed their professional qualifications from ethnologists and historians: O. Ovsiuk, O. Soboleva, Iu. Buiskykh, O. Braichenko, S. Makhovska, and M. Hrymych. Their publications on anthropology of space and anthropology of transformations also were of eclectic nature [Hrymych2016; Hrymych 2018]. Among their authors, there were not only scholars who switched their qualifications from ethnologists to anthropologists, but also historians, sociologists and linguists.

What unites the researchers from the Centre for Applied Anthropology is the postmodern discourse - in the sense of critical attitude towards the predecessors as well as in terms of writing and methodology - regarding the communities, social processes and the culture transformation mechanisms. In their researches, they utilize methods of the social and cultural anthropology. The use of the “anthropological lenses” allows them to view a social phenomenon with regard to the cultural context in which people live. Therefore, it helps to understand their motivations, values, and behaviour strategies. The Centre prioritizes anthropology of business and urban anthropology. On top of that, each researcher works on her own topic: anthropology of space, anthropology of war, anthropology of religion, anthropology of business and communications.

One of the main goals of the Centre is popularization of social and cultural anthropology as a separate academic discipline and its constructive development in Ukraine. Despite various anthropological courses taught at different universities of Ukraine, the status of social and cultural anthropology as a separate area within the Humanities is still undetermined in our country. This specialty has not received any proper development within either the system of Ukrainian academic sciences or higher education. At the moment, there are no faculties or any separate centres at any Ukrainian

universities that would train specialists in either Social Anthropology or Cultural Anthropology.

The employees of the Centre hold a series of international interdisciplinary workshops for young scholars. For example: *An Imagined Borderland: Interpretations of Cultures and Strategies of Partnership* took place in 2017 with participants from Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Germany, Great Britain, and United States; *An Imagined Borderland: Othering and “Our Others” on the Post-Soviet Frontiers* took place in 2018 with participants from Ukraine, Germany, Poland, Great Britain, Slovakia, Russia, USA, Japan. A workshop on urban anthropology under the title *Understanding a City: Anthropology of Post-Socialist Transformations* took place in 2019 with participants from Ukraine, Great Britain, Germany, Poland, and Russia.

In conclusion, I can say that Ukrainian academic disciplines of the folk studies area (such as ethnography, folkloristics, ethnology, and anthropology) had a complicated history over the last century. They came through the “golden age” in the 1920s; political repressions and physical eradication of scholars in the 1930s; critical survival in the nets of the Stalinist and Brezhnev regimes of the 1940s through the 1970s; and then through realization of their peripheral nature and inferiority complex to the rebirth in the 1990s and 2000s when Ukraine became independent.

Taking to account the division proposed by George Stocking [Stocking 1984, 3-7] between “nation-state building anthropologies” and “empire building anthropologies”, one can say that Ukrainian Soviet ethnography was one of “empire building”, because it supported the general idea of Ukrainian periphery inside the empire.

About the historical period of Ukrainian independence, the role of “nation building” science was submitted to ethnology. Two “quiet revolutions” took place over this time. During the first one, in the 1990s, ethnographers started calling themselves ethnologists thus demonstrating a departure from the Soviet past. During the second “quiet revolution”, in 2010s, a group of mainly young researchers sailed away from ethnologists and switched their qualifications to anthropologists. It would seem that anthropology is a new social science in Ukraine but it’s only seemingly so. In reality, considering the historical stages of development of its predecessors, that is ethnology and ethnography, Ukrainian anthropology has good chances of quickly getting into the World academic context. It is especially probable giving its strongest side, namely huge experience in theory and practice of the fieldwork research.

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