

FEATURES OF TRADITIONAL LIVING ENVIRONMENT ON THE SLAVIC-ROMANESQUE BORDER IN SOUTHERN BESSARABIA: THE INFLUENCE OF HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL COMPONENTS

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Abstract. This article analyses the influence of historical and geographical components on the features of the traditional living environment on the Slavic-Romanesque border in Southern Bessarabia (Budjak). The Slavic-Romanesque border in Budjak is a region bordering ethnic Ukrainian and Moldavian territories; it is a historical and geographical region where representatives of different national groups have lived for many centuries. Given the polyethnic nature of the region, its history is dealt with a very extensive Ukrainian, Romanian, Moldavian, Bulgarian, Turkish, Russian historiography, which differently interprets the cultural dominants of Budjak.

There was a Budjak multiculturalism in Southern Bessarabia, that is, the region acted as a “melting pot” when its status as a polyethnic frontier was accompanied by positive cultural, ethno- and socio-psychological processes of mutual enrichment in the field of daily life, spiritual culture, ethnopsychology and assertion of tolerant coexistence.

Having received state support from the governments of Ukraine, Moldova, Romania and Bulgaria, representatives of relevant national cultures in the region can count on the reproduction of historical customs, traditions and household items in well-organized cultural institutions (museums, festivals, ethnocultural art groups, reconstruction groups, etc.), as well as on reflection in relevant professional research.

Keywords: living environment, Slavic-Romanesque border, Southern Bessarabia, Budjak, historical component, geographical component.

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INTRODUCTION

Research topicality

Southern Bessarabia is one of the unique regions of our country in the national and ethnographic dimensions. The basic element of the research topicality is that in the current conditions of globalization, a noticeable trend in Central and Eastern Europe is the intensification of national feelings due to the thriving of certain ethnic groups to protect their cultural or religious identity.

This trend is especially characteristic of countries and regions where the population is polyethnic. Given this, the influence of the national factor on the transformation of social processes is decisive and will be transformed into one of the key prerequisites for socio-political turbulence. In view of the above, the assessment of the historical and ethnographic coexistence of different ethnic groups and the ordering and coordination of various inter-ethnic and inter-faith relations is the basis for preventing conflict in society (Vodinchar, 2016). This fully applies to the Slavic-Romanesque border (or frontier as it is called by some scholars (Novikova, 2017)), where there was peace and harmony in relations between Ukrainians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Moldovans, Gagauz and others for centuries. This was largely due to religious kinship (Orthodox Christianity dominated Southern Bessarabia). At the same time, there were exceptions, especially in the 20th century, when a wave of nationalism engulfed the political forces of the states that either controlled or bordered on the region.

Relation of this topic with important scientific objectives of other subjects

This topic is at the crossroads of several sciences – ethnography, ethnology, the study of local lore, history, cultural studies, etc. The Slavic-Romanesque border in southern Bessarabia should be

considered a region is bordering ethnic Ukrainian and Moldavian territories and a historical and geographical area where representatives of other national groups have lived for many centuries.

Previous studies on the topic

Material and spiritual culture of the population of Southern Bessarabia was reflected in the studies of O. Vasyliiev (2008), Kuzmina (2014), Kuzmina (2012), Novikova (2017), Palamarchuk (2008), Stetskevych and Stetskevych (2011), Ushanova (2019), Church (2013), Black (2013), as well as a team of Odessa authors led by Vodinchar (2016). Besides, taking into account the polyethnic nature of the region, its history is dealt with by a very extensive Romanian, Moldavian, Bulgarian, Turkish historiography, which differently interprets the cultural dominants of Budjak. In the last century in Southern Bessarabia, the origins of ethnographic knowledge were linked to the Church, which organized scientific research within the Chisinau Diocesan Bulletin and began publishing its own field materials in 1867. As a result, ethnographic and culturological works were published about Ukrainians, Moldavians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Gagauz, as well as about mixed families of representatives of these nations.

Priority studies of the Ukrainian-Moldavian and Ukrainian-Romanian borders address the following issues and ethnographic topics: classification of housing on the border, architectural monuments: churches, monasteries, landowners' estates. In some cases, the museums ordered such research, as they needed this ethnographic information to expand and systematize their collections. It was found that the ethnic expressiveness of the housing of the Slavic-Romanesque border was a natural manifestation of the Moldovan-Ukrainian and Romanian-Ukrainian economic and cultural ties.

At the same time, the relevant studies on the Ukrainian-Romanesque border, in particular in the Budjakregion, do not

cover all manifestations of material and spiritual culture, including worldviews and beliefs, customs, rituals, folk knowledge, family and family life, community life and public life, traditional farming, animal husbandry, ancillary occupations and trade, handicrafts, traditional transport, etc.

Scholars must surely continue to study historical and modern features of material and spiritual culture of the ethnically heterogeneous population of the southern regions of a big historical and ethnographic region — Bessarabia.

The research subject is a set of factors influencing the traditional living environment on the Slavic-Romanesque border in Southern Bessarabia (also known as Budjak).

The methodological background is a historical and culturological systemic approach to the study of the subject.

RESULTS

National identity is widely considered both in the scientific community and in international and Ukrainian public discourse, becoming the subject of consideration in both publications and speeches. The number of dissertations, monographs, articles and other studies published in Ukraine on various components of national identity is approaching one thousand. Such actualization of the problems of national identity in the modern world is a response to the globalization processes and a manifestation of the heterogeneous nature of civilizational development. The nations thrive on preserving their own cultures, languages, religions, and traditions directly depending on the “challenges” of globalization. This determines the urgency of addressing issues of national identity and the development of a strategy that can ensure integration into the globalization process of both universal and national components and ensure the right of ethnic groups to identity in cultural and civilizational dimensions.

At the same time, researchers need to understand that there are certain complications with the definition of “identity” in the national dimension, which are related to the ambiguity of the definitions of both identity and nation.

Besides, these complications are related to:

- multidisciplinary nature of national identity, which can be determined in accordance with the methodological tools of many humanities (history, cultural studies, political science, anthropology, social psychology, sociology, etc.);
- the connection of national identity with such fundamental political and philosophical constants as national security, people, ethnicity, state, citizenship on the one hand, as well as globalization, international relations, mass culture, international migration – on the other.

Quite active use of national identity and its components (language, culture, traditions, mentality, etc.) within various political speculations, accompanied by relevant social and security implications.

The issue of national identity is quite acute for historical and geographical areas with a mixed ethnic composition of the population. Southern Bessarabia (or Budjak) is among them in the steppe region of our country, which is not only on the border of the Slavic and Romanesque worlds, it is also in fact, so to speak in the context of the methodology of humanities, close to the tectonic junction of two civilizations — Western and Eastern. This is confirmed by the residence in these territories of a significant number of nationalities with Asian roots (Gagauz, Tatars, etc.).

As for Budjak as the name of this region, this eastern term (literally meaning “side”, “corner of the earth”, “district”) was recorded in the early 17th century, and originally it was not identical to the territory of southern Bessarabia. With the

increase of the Turkic population in this area as part of the Ottoman Empire, the name Budjak in the period before the 19th century began to replace the European name Bessarabia (this is reflected in cartography) (Palamarchuk, 2008, p. 257). The ethno-ethnic composition of the population of Southern Bessarabia was being formed for a long time (since late antiquity and the early Middle Ages) under the influence of many factors, including:

- the location of this territory in the steppe region of Eastern Europe, which was accompanied by the movement of a significant number of nomadic ethnic groups of different ethnic and linguistic affiliation;
- significant changes in the national structure of the population under the influence of military events, which resulted in large-scale migration;
- the advantageous geographical location of the region, its location at the crossroads of trade routes between the Black Sea and the East. The strategic military importance of southern Bessarabia should be added, as the state that controlled this region had the ability to control the mouth of the Danube, Dniester and Prut, and therefore — to keep access to the Black Sea under control (Stetskevych, 2011, p. 138).

Bessarabia, including its southern part, fully revealed the historical experience of the region in its formation, which was on the border of civilizations. The East was represented by the Great Steppe and Muslim Asia, as well as Byzantium, partially inherited by the Ottoman Empire in the form of separate institutions, and the West – by Christian Europe (Catholic states of Poland and Hungary) (Palamarchuk, 2008, p. 240). The closest geographical surroundings of the historical and geographical region were Moldavia and Wallachia, with the Orthodox political and religious orientation of the ruling dynasties and Ukrainian lands with a predominance

of Orthodox population. The lands of Orthodox Bulgaria were located to the southwest of the Danube, which was part of the province of the Ottoman Empire called Rumelia until the mid-nineteenth century. On this ground, a considerable influence of Christian Orthodox culture on the culture and way of life of the population of this region should be noted.

The penetration of Slavic civilization and everyday culture into this steppe region began in the times of Kievan Rus when a tribe of the Uliches settled in the interfluvium of the Dniester and Prut rivers (including its southern part). The proto-Romanesque influence was felt from the west, where the Daco-Thracian tribes lived (Stetskevych, 2011, p. 138). The actual formation of a modern living environment on the Ukrainian-Romanesque border in Bessarabia began after the conclusion of the Bucharest Peace Treaty between the Russian and Ottoman empires (May 16, 1812), according to which the recurrent Russian-Turkish war ended. Under the terms of the fourth article of the treaty, the territories between the Prut and the Dniester with their fortresses, fortifications, towns and settlements were ceded to the Russian Empire.

The change of the ethnic picture of the region began from that time, which had the following manifestations:

- increased number of colonists from among the Ukrainian population, which was a consequence of the policy of the country's central government on the rapid settlement and economic development of the new province;
- minimizing the presence of the Muslim population and strengthening the position of Orthodox Christians;
- the growing number of immigrants from Central Europe (the need for colonists with a high level of agricultural culture and skills);
- attracting Jews from the central regions of Ukraine, who played an

important role in the development of trade and industry in Budjak.

Trends in absolute population growth were characteristic of both the urban and rural population of Budjak. The leading cities in the region were Izmail and Akkerman. The national structure of the urban community underwent the greatest transformations after joining the Russian Empire. For example, there was a dynamic increase in the number of Russians in Izmail, who became more numerous in the city than Moldovans and Ukrainians, according to quantitative data.

The positive image of the region was largely due to the following social and economic circumstances:

- the absence of serfdom in this area (the exception was the category of serf gypsies, which existed here before);
- exemption of the Bessarabia population from taxation in the Russian Empire (local residents served only public duties);
- dynamic growth of the Jewish agricultural population, which settled on the state lands of Budjak on preferential terms, which led to an increase in their number;
- active development of profitable branches of the agrosphere, in particular crop production (mulberry plantations, potato growing) and animal husbandry (including horse herding and merino sheep breeding). At the same time, certain branches of agriculture were engaged in by representatives of the German population (winemaking, milling and potato growing), while local Bulgarian colonists in the region were usually engaged in sheep-breeding;
- the spread of the merchants' activity, who owned shops, waxworks, brick and tile factories, as well as breweries, tallow houses and soap factories in southern Bessarabia;
- development of crafts, in particular fishing, which was traditionally

practised in Budjak by ethnic Russians — Nekrasov Cossacks, as well as handicrafts (local Gypsy population).

All the above gave grounds to domestic scientists (Stetskevych and Stetskevych, 2011 p. 141-142) to argue that there was a Budjak multiculturalism in Southern Bessarabia (also called Terra Bugeac), that is, the region acted as a "melting pot", when its status as a polyethnic frontier was accompanied by positive cultural, ethno- and socio-psychological processes of mutual enrichment in the field of daily life, spiritual culture, ethnopsychology, and the establishment of tolerant coexistence.

Speaking of the traditional living environment of the population of the studied region, we should focus on the evolution of decor. In the early stages of the development of housing architecture in Southern Bessarabia, the main means of decoration of traditional housing were the texture and colour of materials offered to man by nature. So, local building materials greatly facilitated the choice of methods of artistic creation of architecture. In view of the above, architectural and artistic techniques of home decor, which were based on the available material, have not undergone significant changes almost to the beginning of the 20th century but have transformed in the course of historical development.

In the traditional dwellings of Southern Bessarabia, the smooth surface of the plastered and whitewashed wall provided significant opportunities for the development of picturesque and colourful means of its decor. Architectural and decorative methods of design of folk housing were quite naturally combined with other types of folk art, which became widespread in the Ukrainian-Moldavian border – it was, first of all, pottery, weaving, embroidery, carpet weaving. These arts have developed the artistic traditions of traditional home decor. Knowledge of the development of coloured clays, which were very common in that part of Ukraine, and plant paints for

decorating folk products contributed to the development and improvement of decorative techniques of home decoration.

Practical expediency, as well as artistic and aesthetic expressiveness, were naturally combined in the artistic decoration of public housing on the Ukrainian-Moldavian border. A characteristic feature of Ukrainian folk housing in Southern Bessarabia was and still is its picturesqueness.

The arid steppe conditions in Southern Bessarabia made it possible to use techniques of exceptional decoration. Under these conditions, the free use of colour in bold contrasting combinations against the background of the rich nature of the steppe creates the impression of uniqueness and beauty.

In this region, the paintings can be called decorative, not "wall-type", because the walls were painted and the ceiling with its elements, the fill and even the walls and ceiling in the inner porches. Both the interior and exterior walls of the house had permanent places for paintings. The originality of the artistic solution of the housing variant on the Ukrainian-Moldavian border was determined by the combination of constructive homogeneity of all housing with the widespread use of monumental paintings.

Polychrome paintings, primarily of a plant nature, have become very popular in the exterior design of Moldovan houses. The main features of coloured liners were similar to the decor of Ukrainian folk dwellings when this technique emphasised the frame, as well as contouring coloured stripes of windows and doors as architectural elements.

In both Ukrainian and Moldavian houses in Southern Bessarabia, the theme of painting has evolved over a long period of time from simple geometric elements to complex animal and plant images, which have acquired features of exceptional decoration, losing their original magical and cosmogonic significance.

CONCLUSIONS

So, considering the influence of historical and geographical components on the features of traditional living environment on the Slavic-Romanesque border in Southern Bessarabia, we came to the following conclusions:

1. A prerequisite for finding the national identity of the form of the state is the existence of single political, economic, informational, educational, religious and other institutions for a particular nation. State institutions use the policy of forming a national identity to develop the sphere of communication between different bearers of certain political beliefs and preferences. At a time when the formation of civic identity is based on a "daily plebiscite", similar processes to establish national identity require planned and long-term actions of the state, which must also be based on the relevant point of view of the population.

2. Socio-demographic, ethno-confessional, ethnographic and linguistic structures of Southern Bessarabia show temporal stability. Modern domestic historiography is characterized by the realization that the multilevel and interdependent historical process in the territory of Southern Bessarabia should not be associated with any single ethnic group. The search for the priority of one person, characteristic of the national historiographies of past centuries, is replaced by the search for a specific contribution of different peoples who have left their trace on the land.

3. The interest of many ethnic groups' interest in living in Budjak (Southern Bessarabia), with the traditional Ukrainian-Romanesque border (its southern geographical border), has traditionally been determined by the possibility of improving living standards social status through government benefits. The "Transdanubian migrants" category in this region was a polyethnic group that had more social and less national significance,

where ethnic boundaries were gradually blurred. Ethnic diversity has formed a specific historical memory here, as well as self-awareness.

4. All the above, together with the Southern Bessarabia's being a part of many states, directly influenced the history of the formation of unique, eclectic material and spiritual culture. In this publication, the study focuses primarily on the combination of elements of the traditional culture of the Slavic (Ukrainians, Bulgarians, etc.) with the Romanesque (Moldovans, Romanians) world in the domestic environment of this region. The representatives of these nations surely do not exhaust the ethnological sources of daily life and other components of the traditional culture of the inhabitants of Southern Bessarabia. Having received state support from the governments of Ukraine, Moldova, Romania and Bulgaria, representatives of these national cultures in the current conditions of post-industrial society can, however, count on the reproduction of historical customs, traditions and household items in well-organized cultural institutions.(museums, festivals, ethnocultural art groups, reconstruction

groups, etc.), as well as on reflection in relevant professional research. Finally, many discussions have begun at the political level and are still ongoing on the formation of Moldovan and Bulgarian national and cultural autonomies in southern Bessarabia.

Prospects of further research. It can be predicted that the researcher can apply the method of considering Southern Bessarabia as a region of eclectic interpenetration of many national cultures in professional interdisciplinary research on: domestic environment of other fundamentally similar regions of Ukraine (Transcarpathia, Bukovyna, temporarily occupied Crimea); material and spiritual culture of the rural population of certain historical and geographical areas of Eastern Europe, where there was also a "diffusion" on the ethno-national border (it is Dobruja in Bulgaria, Transylvania in Romania, Kosovo in the former Yugoslavia, and the latter case, in contrast to Budjak, is a manifestation of peaceful coexistence of ethnic groups on the border); the role of international borders in hybrid conflicts of the 21st century.

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