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# THE FUNCTIONAL POTENTIAL OF UKRAINIAN FOLK EMBROIDERY IN THE PROCESSES OF IDENTIFICATION AND COMMUNICATION IN THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIO-CULTURAL SPACE

**Abstract**. The relevance of the research topic. In the context of contemporary social transformations, the intensification of globalisation processes and the need to preserve national identity, the study of the traditional cultural values of the Ukrainian people takes on particular significance. Ukrainian embroidery is not only an element of folk art, but also an important means of representing the national identity, historical memory and spiritual heritage of Ukrainians.

Aim of the study. To investigate the role of Ukrainian embroidery as a key artistic component of traditional national dress in the processes of forming the national consciousness of Ukrainians, strengthening social communication, and consolidating and uniting the people in the context of Ukraine's contemporary nation-building.

Research methodology. The theoretical and methodological basis of the study consists of methods of analysis, synthesis, generalisation and systematisation of scientific sources and factual material.

Scientific novelty. The article highlights the significance of Ukrainian embroidery as a factor in the national self-identification and cultural unity of the Ukrainian people. The mechanisms of national identity formation through traditional rituals and folk culture are analysed. The regional specificity of traditional Ukrainian clothing, the characteristics of ornamental motifs, symbolism and embroidery techniques, as well as their influence on the worldview, mentality and national consciousness of Ukrainians, are outlined.

Conclusions. Ukrainian traditional clothing is an important cultural and artistic heritage of the people, within which embroidery occupies a special place as a symbol of ethno-cultural heritage and a carrier of socio-cultural information. An embroidered shirt is one of the key functional and symbolic elements of Ukrainian attire, reflecting the level of cultural development of society, the characteristics of communicative behaviour, an individual's social status and their affiliation with a particular social group. At the same time, it represents a system of moral values, traditions and ethnic concepts that form the national identity of the Ukrainian people.

**Keywords**: Ukrainian embroidery, traditional Ukrainian clothing, folk costume, Ukrainian nation, embroidery techniques, ornamental motifs, symbolism, national self-identification, Ukrainian culture.

# ФУНКЦІОНАЛЬНИЙ ПОТЕНЦІАЛ УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ НАРОДНОЇ ВИШИВКИ У ПРОЦЕСАХ ІДЕНТИФІКАЦІЇ ТА КОМУНІКАЦІЇ В СУЧАСНОМУ СОЦІОКУЛЬТУРНОМУ ПРОСТОРІ

**Анотація**. В умовах сучасних суспільних трансформацій, посилення глобалізаційних процесів та необхідності збереження національної самобутності особливого значення набуває вивчення традиційних культурних цінностей українського народу. Українська вишивка виступає не лише елементом народного мистецтва, а й важливим засобом репрезентації національної ідентичності, історичної пам'яті та духовної спадщини українців.

Метою дослідження є дослідити роль української вишивки як важливого мистецького складника традиційного національного одягу у процесах формування національної самосвідомості українців, зміцнення суспільної комунікації, консолідації та єднання народу в умовах сучасного державотворення України.

Теоретико-методологічну основу дослідження становлять методи аналізу, синтезу, узагальнення та систематизації наукових джерел і фактичного матеріалу.

У статті висвітлено значення української вишивки як чинника національної самоідентифікації та культурної єдності українського народу. Проаналізовано механізми формування національної ідентичності через традиційну обрядовість і народну культуру. Окреслено регіональну специфіку українського традиційного одягу, особливості орнаментальних мотивів, символіки та технік вишивання, а також їхній вплив на світоглядні уявлення, ментальність і національну свідомість українців.

Український традиційний одяг є важливим культурно-мистецьким надбанням народу, у структурі якого вишивка посідає особливе місце як символ етнокультурної спадщини та носій соціокультурної інформації. Вишита сорочка виступає одним із ключових функціональних і символічних елементів українського вбрання, відображаючи рівень культурного розвитку суспільства, особливості комунікативної поведінки, соціальний статус особи та її належність до певної суспільної групи. Водночас вона репрезентує систему моральних цінностей, традицій та етнічних уявлень, що формують національну ідентичність українського народу.

**Ключові слова**: українська вишивка, традиційний український одяг, народне вбрання, українська нація, техніки вишивання, орнаментальні мотиви, символіка, національна самоідентифікація, українська культура.

## INTRODUCTION

**The problem formulation.** Ukrainian folk embroidery is an important part of the national cultural heritage and an art form of considerable value that serves a communicative as well as an aesthetic function. National consciousness cannot develop without an awareness of the historical past, cultural traditions and one's own national identity. In the context of contemporary social transformations, the challenges of globalisation and state-building, preserving the cultural heritage of the Ukrainian people, strengthening their national identity and developing national consciousness are therefore particularly relevant.

**Analysis of recent research and publications**. Many Ukrainian scholars have examined folk embroidery, its symbolism and its functional potential. The theoretical aspects of national identity and cultural consciousness are discussed in studies by V. Serhiichuk, O. Zadorozhnyi, V. Skliar, H. Kasianov and I. Kutsyi, which emphasise the historical and sociocultural factors involved in their formation.

Specific aspects of traditional culture and rituals, and their role in preserving ethnic memory, are explored by Yu. Katrina, S. Cherepanova, B. Bilei, O. Mazurkevych and V. Diachuk. Studies by O. Voropai, O. Vlasiuk, L. Ohneva, R. Zakharchuk-Chuhai, S. Haiova, O. Kosmina, S. Latanskyi, S. Sydorovych, B. Sushevskyi, Yu. Melnychuk, O. Katsan and others are also of considerable scholarly value. They examine folk dress, Ukrainian costume and weaving in the formation of a distinctive culture, the self-identification of Ukrainians as a people and the study of their ethnic culture.

## AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to examine how Ukrainian embroidery, as an artistic phenomenon of Ukrainian costume, influences the development of the Ukrainian people's consciousness, their communicative interaction, and their consolidation and unity under contemporary conditions of Ukrainian state development.

## RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

Presentation of the main material. Identity is a complex structure that develops throughout a person's life, changes in both progressive and regressive directions, and is shaped as the person overcomes life crises and challenges. Identity is a primary and necessary condition for personal development (Kozlovets, 2015, p. 58). It is understood as a person's awareness of belonging and connection to a particular nation, social group, set of cultural values, geographical environment and the social order of a given community.

Various aspects of national identity are discussed in the works of V. Serhiichuk and O. Zadorozhnyi. Yu. Katryna examines the significance of Christian rituals for the ethnonational development of Ukrainians. S. Cherepanova investigates the origins of folk rituals, while B. Bilei explores the role of the church in preserving rituals and culture. R. Zakharchuk-Chuhai's study, Folk Embroidery of Western Ukraine in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, provides valuable information on regional and local stylistic features of embroidery techniques, colour palettes and patterns in Bukovyna and Western Podillia.

Following O. Redko's view that a person's consciousness is expressed through national self-identification, national consciousness is an important component of spirituality and includes cultural and historical memory as an image of the past, present and future (Serhiichuk, 2017, pp. 26–35). Protective objects accompanied Ukrainians throughout their lives: Easter wax candles, wedding rushnyky (ritual towels), kerchiefs, embroidered shirts, wedding rings and others (Gurkina, Serdiuk, 2008, p. 95). One of the main functions of embroidery is to decorate clothing and household textiles. Traditionally, embroidery was worked on homespun woollen, linen and hemp fabrics (Shostak, Titor, 2023, pp. 125–133). Ukrainian clothing is classified by various characteristics, including the region in which it is worn (Polissia, Podillia, Poltava region, Volyn and others); how it is worn (around the hips, over the shoulders, as outerwear or underwear); cut (pleated, closed, one-piece, openwork or cut-out); material (homespun or factory-made, linen or wool); colour scheme (single-colour or multicolour); ritual purpose (family or seasonal); and gender (men's or women's) (Folk Culture of Ukrainians: The Human Life Cycle, 2010, vol. 3, p. 134). Traditional Ukrainian dress comprises several elements, including cloaks, headwear, footwear and ornaments.

The shirt is the principal element of Ukrainian national dress. It had many local names, including koshulia, morshynka, oplich, prysbirka, rubatka, sorochevna, khlopianka and chumachka. Although its cut varied, it was always associated with embroidery. A woman's shirt symbolised the continuation of life. A woman with many children would

lend her shirt to a woman who could not conceive. Shirt decoration reflected changes in a woman's age. Bright, vivid colours distinguished the attire of a "married" young woman, while older women's clothing was more subdued (Som, 1964, p. 89). Embroidered shirts were passed down through generations as family heirlooms. Embroidered motifs such as serrations, diamonds and zigzags represented earth and water, people and animals, birds and plants; they were intended to protect the human soul from destruction (Gurkina, Serdiuk, 2008, p. 95). Because the shirt is the garment closest to the body, it was associated with the magical power believed to reside in the human body; its embroidery therefore had symbolic significance as a person's protector and symbolic substitute (Skliar, 2017, pp. 24–32). Men wore sleeveless shirts, with cloaks, capes and hooded jackets serving as outerwear (Gurkina, Serdiuk, 2008, p. 95). Wedding shirts were always cut in a particular way and embroidered on a single piece of cloth for their full length, which gave them the highest ritual status in Ukrainian ceremonial culture (5; 7, 2010). The wedding shirt sewn by a young woman for her bridegroom symbolised his "rebirth" as his social status changed. Embroidered wedding shirts conveyed wishes for a happy family life. Everyday shirts were rarely embroidered and were made from coarse, unbleached fabric (Folk Culture of Ukrainians: The Human Life Cycle, 2010, vol. 2, p. 127). This symbolism reflected ancient Ukrainian ideas about the "cult of the earth" and the native land. The worldview of the Ukrainian people developed under the influence of the natural environment and traditions, which shaped their way of life. Diverse regional differences gradually gave way to a national consciousness grounded in the people's agrarian character, the value of land and the idea of Mother Earth. Dominant ideas in Ukrainian culture are closely connected with nature and its maternal origins and primacy, expressed in gentleness and lyricism, as well as tolerance, kindness and respect for elders in social life (Mazurkevych, Diachuk, 2015, pp. 43, 50–57).

Headwear was the principal indicator of age in Ukrainian women's dress and consisted of two components: a draped piece of fabric and a sewn head covering. The former was tied around the head in various ways over the sewn covering (a cap, bonnet or similar garment) and also served as a gender marker. Headwear was made from expensive fabrics and decorated with silk or velvet ribbons. The wreath was considered the head covering of unmarried girls. In the Poltava and Kyiv regions, for example, wreaths were made from silk ribbons arranged in different ways, including rosettes and pleats (Folk Culture of Ukrainians: The Human Life Cycle, 2010, vol. 3, p. 120). Festive headwear was decorated with several rows of multicoloured beaded ribbons, and its upper part with coloured duck feathers and woollen balls (Folk Culture of Ukrainians: The Human Life Cycle, 2010, vol. 2, p. 131). In addition to shirts, headwear and outerwear, girls' dress featured an apron that distinguished it from women's clothing. The apron indicated that a girl had reached an age at which she could attend evening gatherings and girls' festivities. Coral, amber, pearls and numerous necklaces formed an elaborate ensemble that complemented the clothing and served as a kind of protective barrier between the outside world and the wearer (Folk Culture of Ukrainians: The Human Life Cycle, 2010, vol. 2, p. 133).

The novelty of this study lies in its detailed examination of the influence of Ukrainian embroidery on the self-identification and unifying interactions of the Ukrainian people; its analysis of the ways national identity is formed through Ukrainian ritual art; and its identification of differences and typical regional features of Ukrainian clothing, symbolic imagery and embroidered ornaments, and their expression in the people's mentality and national identity. In the formation of social consciousness, national identity emerges as a complex system of ideas, values and cultural symbols connected with spiritual heritage, historical memory and the material expressions of culture. It develops under the influence of the social environment, historical experience and the cultural practices of an ethnic community. According to O. S. Redko, a system of traditions and customs shapes young people's worldview and values by transmitting the social experience and achievements of previous generations (Redko, 2009, pp. 288–289).

**CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS OF FURTHER RESEARCH**

The study leads to the following conclusions. First, the image of Ukrainian culture and national identity is inseparable from Ukrainian clothing and embroidery, including the decoration techniques, patterns, composition and colours characteristic of each region of Ukraine. These changed over the centuries, while traditional rules for wearing clothing in communicative contexts remained stable, expressing the character of the people through interaction and the formation of patterns in spiritual culture. Second, Ukrainian embroidery is an integral attribute and symbol of Ukrainian folk culture and a medium of ethnocultural information. Third, among Ukrainian garments, the shirt is the principal functional and symbolic element of women's dress. It reflects the development and specific features of Ukrainians' communicative behaviour and is used to indicate social status, membership of a particular social stratum, and links to ethnic conventions and moral norms of conduct. Further research is needed to systematise, evaluate and reassess embroidery as an artistic phenomenon, including national dress and its decoration, the prominence of particular colours and the communicative influence of inherited spiritual and material culture on the formation of the Ukrainian people's national consciousness.

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