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VYSHYVANKA AS A SYMBOL OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF WAR IN UKRAINE

Abstract. The article substantiates the relevance of studying the vyshyvanka as a contemporary cultural phenomenon, which, in the context of full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine, has acquired new significance and embodies a new conceptual role in society. It is stated that the vyshyvanka is no longer just an element of traditional national clothing, but also a powerful symbol of national resistance, unity, and the indomitable spirit of the Ukrainian people, as well as a means of visualising identity in the context of military and information confrontation. The relevance of scientific analysis of the vyshyvanka as a significant ethnocultural element that accumulates the deep values of the people and is a key factor in the formation of the modern narrative of Ukrainian identity is outlined.

It has been established that in the context of war, new designs of embroidered shirts acquire deeper symbolism, reflecting historical memory, heroism, national dignity, and solidarity. The methodological basis of the study is highlighted, which includes a systematic approach, as well as analytical, cultural, art, semiotic, and axiological methods. This provides a comprehensive and multifaceted analysis of the cultural phenomenon of the vyshyvanka. It has been found that vyshyvanka performs a number of important functions: it is not only a symbol of national and cultural identity, but also a means of individual self-expression, an element of social and political discourse, and an instrument of cultural resistance.

It is concluded that in the context of full-scale war, the vyshyvanka is transformed into a significant cultural code of modernity, which actively influences the formation of the worldview of Ukrainian society, contributes to the preservation of historical memory and the unity of the nation. Thus, vyshyvanka is not only a bearer of ethnic heritage, but also an effective tool for consolidating the Ukrainian people in wartime.

Keywords: Ukrainian vyshyvanka, narrative of Ukrainian identity, ethnocultural values, symbolism, armed aggression, national and cultural identity.

ВИШИВАНКА ЯК СИМВОЛ НАЦІОНАЛЬНОЇ ІДЕНТИЧНОСТІ В УМОВАХ ВІЙНИ В УКРАЇНІ

Анотація. У статті обґрунтовано доцільність вивчення вишиванки як сучасного культурного феномену, що в умовах повномасштабної збройної агресії проти України набуває нового значення та втілює нову концептуальну роль у суспільстві. Констатовано, що вишиванка вже не лише елемент традиційного національного одягу, а й потужний символ національного спротиву, єдності, незламності духу українського народу та засіб візуалізації ідентичності в умовах військового та інформаційного протистояння. Окреслено актуальність наукового аналізу вишиванки як знакового етнокультурного елементу, що акумулює глибинні цінності народу та є ключовим чинником у формуванні сучасного наративу української ідентичності.

Встановлено, що в умовах війни нові дизайни вишиванок набувають глибшого символізму, відображаючи історичну пам'ять, героїзм, національну гідність і солідарність. Висвітлено методологічну базу дослідження, яка включає системний підхід, а також аналітичний, культурологічний, мистецтвознавчий, семіотичний та аксіологічний методи. Це забезпечує цілісний і багатоаспектний аналіз культурного явища вишиванки. З'ясовано, що вишиванка виконує низку важливих функцій: вона є не лише символом національно-культурної ідентичності, а й засобом індивідуального самовираження, елементом соціального та політичного дискурсу, а також інструментом культурного спротиву.

Зроблено висновки, що в умовах повномасштабної війни вишиванка трансформується у значущий культурний код сучасності, що активно впливає на формування світоглядних орієнтирів українського суспільства, сприяє збереженню



історичної пам'яті та єдності нації. Таким чином, вишиванка виступає не лише носієм етнічної спадщини, а й дієвим інструментом консолідації українського народу в умовах воєнного часу.

Ключові слова: українська вишиванка, наратив української ідентичності, етнокультурні цінності, символізм, збройна агресія, національно-культурна ідентичність.

INTRODUCTION

Problem statement. In terms of the depth of expression of national cultural values, embroidery, as part of traditional Ukrainian culture and art, occupies one of the leading places. The significance of embroidered clothing contains a number of cultural symbols and meanings that were formed during the development of Ukrainian culture, acquiring perfection in graphic and colouristic outlines. The embroidered shirt has absorbed all the diversity of artistic imagery of traditional folk culture. In the modern world, vyshyvanka is an invaluable treasure trove of Ukrainian spiritual culture. At the same time, the simplest way to express one's national and cultural identity is to wear vyshyvanka. In the context of information warfare and open armed aggression, the embroidered shirt has become an attribute of spiritual resilience, national and cultural identity, and serves as a marker of national belonging. Vyshyvanka a priori creates a narrative of Ukrainian identity, as it is clearly associated with Ukraine and Ukrainian culture.

Analysis of recent research and publications. In the system of scientific research, many works are devoted to vyshyvanka, highlighting various aspects of this issue from the perspectives of cultural history, art history, applied arts, and folk art. The embroidered shirt appears as a unifying symbol that serves as a marker of national unity. In the context of this issue, the scientific works of such researchers as O. Vinichuk, N. Glebova, L. Andrushko, M. Palagniuk, Yu. Polovynchak, M. Oliinyk, O. Ryzhko, N. Khoma and M. Shulga are of great importance.

AIM AND TASKS RESEARCH – to study the phenomenon of vyshyvanka as an object of the narrative of Ukrainian identity in modern society, which accumulates ethnocultural values, serving as a means of national and cultural belonging.

RESEARCH METHODS include the use of a systematic approach, as well as analytical, cultural, art, semiotic and axiological methods, which provide a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the problem and formulate reasoned conclusions.

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

Presentation of the main results of the research. Since the vyshyvanka is part of the national costume and an object of traditional Ukrainian ethnic culture, it is important to consider the understanding of the origins of ethnic culture and social values.

A characteristic feature of any culture is its ethnic component, which emphasises its uniqueness and originality among other cultures. Ethnic origins were formed over a significant period of time and under specific historical conditions of life of a particular people. Everything important that was inherent in the ethnic group throughout its historical existence accumulated in certain models of social and political organisation, behaviour, way of thinking, self-awareness, culture creation and communication, which was inherent in the ethnic group and subsequently turned into values, guidelines and ideals.

The space of existence of any ethnic group is a socio-natural formation, the specificity of which is reflected in the forms and methods of national culture. The environment of ethnocultural communities acts not only as a kind of context in which culture is formed, but also as its own integral part (Hlebova N. I., 2012, p. 31). Accordingly, during the formation of an ethnic group, its values emerge, which determine the sociocultural organisation and value system of the ethnic group.

Over the long period of existence of traditional societies, ethnocultural values in their cultures normalised worldviews, behaviour patterns, moral choices, etc. In other words, ethnocultural values created a meaningful environment that was reflected in material and spiritual culture and formed the basic foundations of the existence of an ethnic community, its value-semantic structure.

As a result, in the process of ethnic formation of peoples, basic values, as noted by researcher L. Andrushko, create a cultural foundation, determine the rules of interaction, set priorities, give assessments, and define goals. Accordingly, ethnicity represents a conscious space for communication and interaction, which is always based on identifying oneself in contrast to others (Andrushko L. V., 2016, p. 82). Thus, ethnocultural values contain a certain cultural identity, which also forms the basis of the identity model. This becomes most noticeable in times of crisis, especially now that we have been witnessing it since the beginning of military aggression against Ukraine.

Given that ethnicity is the fundamental essence of nationality, it is in ethnocultural values that the psychological and cultural experience of ethnic groups is accumulated. For a long time, it remained stable, using the transmission of cultural traditions to subsequent generations for its further preservation.

These values became decisive in the further development of both culture in general and spiritual foundations, which was reflected in customs and rituals, folklore and art, everyday rules of conduct, etc. This allows society to preserve its identity and uniqueness, while serving as an "identification marker" of national and cultural identity. The same can be said about folk clothing as part of Ukrainian national culture.

In general, the values of each ethnic culture form the basis of its worldview and life activities. In the course of historical development, these values may change: outdated ones give way to new ones that are more relevant and necessary for the further existence of the ethnic group. Defined by authentic meanings, any ethnic culture, thanks to certain norms, values, ideals, forms its own special cultural society, its own form of sociocultural communication, its



own moral and ethical foundations of social life, along with its own types of thinking, feelings, and value orientations, which are based on the unique worldview inherent in a particular ethnic group (Andrushko L. V., 2016, p. 76).

In the process of civilizational development of societies, ethnocultural values have become the basis of national values, forming their core. In other words, in this case, they are perceived as stable and unchanging meanings that are capable of satisfying the needs of representatives of ethnic and national communities.

Values are formed by a specific historical period and cultural environment, where they perform their functions. Accordingly, certain basic universal human values, as well as ethnocultural values, remain almost unchanged throughout time. Each era, state of social development, and technical progress influence the process of creating meanings, especially at the stage of their dissemination. However, according to R. Shulga, it can also be said that the immanent content of cultural meanings remains unchanged – the focus on the integration of society and the consolidation of the actions of its members (Shulga R., 2015, p.385).

The current situation in the value system of Ukrainian society is quite complex and has recently undergone significant changes due to external factors, among which war is the most decisive. In connection with military aggression, almost the entire society is experiencing rapid changes in values at the level of consciousness and national identity.

Symbols that embody certain values in the cultural space are not always leading, especially when there are conflicting value systems in society. Accordingly, symbolic images that have already lost their influence, as well as new ones that have not yet acquired a dominant status, have different effects on the cultural and information environment. On a symbolic level, the vyshyvanka represents the values of national identity, which are currently gaining relevance and finding a clear response in society, serving as a moral and spiritual foundation in difficult and crisis times, embodying the deep foundations of the national worldview. This, in turn, forms the narrative of Ukrainian identity, as opposed to pro-Russian propaganda.

The confrontation between the two value systems (Ukrainian and Russian-Soviet) in Ukrainian society intensified with the start of the war in Donbas. Now we are witnessing a phase caused by open armed aggression. Therefore, the problem of reassessment of values and, in fact, choosing a new worldview model has become relevant for the entire Ukrainian society (Shulga O., 2014, p. 130). In fact, this also concerns ethno-cultural values, which have become a determining factor in value-oriented choices. At the same time, they have gained importance in society as a key element of the national cultural code and, on a symbolic level, have become a guarantee of the preservation of the nation state and its independence. In defining the basic ethnocultural values of Ukrainian society, researchers emphasize the transformation of their meanings in the context of both the global crisis and the socio-political upheavals within the country associated with protest movements, the Revolution of Dignity and the war in eastern Ukraine that began in 2014 (Vinnichuk O. V., 2015, p. 37).

According to M. Palagniuk, such changes in values are caused by the fact that the issue of ethnicity arises clearly and sharply when social tensions within society or between different communities escalate into conflict (Palahniuk M. M., 2015, p. 162). This thesis has been repeatedly confirmed by examples in world history, and, in fact, its effect could be observed once again in events of national significance.

It is worth noting the presence of the “vyshyvanka” as a specific conceptual and semantic concept in the media environment, whose symbolic meanings researchers associate with positive values that are actualised as evidence of constructive trends in society, particularly among young people, contributing to the formation of a value paradigm in society, which, in turn, ensures the realisation of the formation of national consciousness (Ryzhko O. M., 2013, p. 36).

Accordingly, the concept of the vyshyvanka fulfils its symbolic function, because, according to Y. Polovynchak, symbols are an important component of the self-interpretation of the national community in culture. Through symbolisation, participants in communication “read” each other’s culture, identify “their own” and distinguish “others”; shared traditions, understanding of the surrounding world and oneself in it determine a person’s belonging to a particular community. The researcher emphasises that “in Ukraine, the last three years have seen active production of content related to the establishment of national symbols in the Ukrainian space: in real life — flags or patriotic paintings on city streets, cars, building balconies, “march of embroidered shirts,” patriotic procession, quite frequent ... there are references to symbols as points, emotional anchors that held people together in the most psychologically difficult times, which determines the power of the influence of such symbolisation. Symbols are also characterised by a multiplicity of meanings, functioning as an open image and semantic perspectives” (Polovynchak Yu. M., 2016, p. 66).

A classic vyshyvanka or other clothing with vyshyvanka ornamentation is not just ceremonial clothing, but, as N. Khoma emphasises, something by which Ukrainians can be identified. “Clothing begins to actively serve the function of expressing Ukrainian self-awareness. Clothing with ethnic motifs and patriotic prints is a simple and obvious way to express one’s feelings for one’s native land, demonstrating to others one’s attachment to the Motherland and everything associated with it” (Khoma N. M., 2015, p. 325). “Clothing is becoming a form of national identification, of belonging to the state of Ukraine. The symbolism of such clothing is the transmission of information from the wearer to the environment using a specific code” (Khoma N. M., 2015, p. 327).

During the struggle for Ukraine’s independence and territorial integrity, the vyshyvanka became a symbol of indomitable spirit, patriotism and unity of the nation. It is proudly worn by both civilians and military personnel – the modern defenders of Ukraine. At the front, under bulletproof vests, the vyshyvanka warms the hearts of our soldiers, reminding them of their homes, the strength of their people, and the lofty goal for which they are risking their lives. It is a kind of talisman, a symbol of the indomitable Cossack spirit that lives in their hearts.



CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

In summary, we note that the vyshyvanka, as a component of Ukrainian folk clothing and part of traditional ethnic culture, is one of the most vivid representatives of cultural traditions and values. In the modern information space, it has become a marker of national and cultural identity and a means of individual self-expression. Embodying national cultural values, the embroidered shirt has acquired a special symbolic meaning, becoming an integral part of the social, political and cultural life of modern society. Vyshyvanka serves as a means of shaping the narrative of Ukrainian identity, conveying the values and meanings of the Ukrainian worldview. In the context of armed aggression against Ukraine, modern designs of embroidered shirts have acquired a new symbolism of struggle against the enemy, reflecting the indomitable spirit of the Ukrainian people. Therefore, we can affirm the cultural universality of folk embroidered clothing, the continuity of traditions and the centuries-old embodiment of the cultural code of the nation, which is becoming relevant at a turning point in national existence.

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