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THE TRADITIONAL CULTURE OF THE DONETSK REGION AND ADJACENT AREAS DURING THE HOLODOMOR, BASED ON THE COLLECTION OF STEPAN MYSHANYCH

Abstract

The Donetsk region is a Ukrainian region characterised by a complex and dynamic history, a distinctive culture, and a tragic fate. The article examines testimonies concerning the state of musical traditions during and after the Holodomor periods. It discusses how the extreme conditions affected traditional rituals and musical leisure practices during the years of hardship and famine, and examines selected folk songs that reflect people's attitudes towards the Soviet way of life. The study concludes that, despite the prolonged ethnocide and Russification, Ukrainian song and traditions remained dominant in the Donetsk region until relatively recently; however, due to a series of recent tragic events, this intangible cultural heritage has suffered irreversible destruction. KEY WORDS: Donetsk region, traditional culture, Holodomor, Stepan Myshanych folklore collection.

Anotacija

Donecko sritis yra Ukrainos regionas, pasižymintis sudėtinga ir dinamiška istorija, savita kultūra ir tragišku likimu. Straipsnyje nagrinėjami liudijimai apie vietinės muzikinės tradicijos būklę Holodomoro laikotarpiu ir po jo. Aptariama, kaip ekstremalios sąlygos paveikė tradicines apeigas ir muzikinį folklorą sunkiu badmečio laikotarpiu. Tiriamos liaudies dainos, atspindinčios to meto

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Donecko regiono žmonių požiūrį į sovietinį gyvenimo būdą. Tyrimo išvadose teigiama, kad, nepaisant užsitęsusio etnocido ir rusifikacijos, ukrainiečių dainos ir tradicijos aptariamoje srityje buvo išlikusios beveik iki pat šiol, tačiau dėl pastarųjų tragiškų įvykių šis nematerialus kultūros paveldas yra negrįžtamai sunaikintas.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: Donecko sritis, tradicinė kultūra, Holodomoras, Stepano Myšaničiaus folkloro rinkinys.

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Problem statement

The topic of the Holodomor in Ukraine and beyond its borders has been extensively studied and documented, as is evidenced by the substantial body of historical, cultural and ethnological scholarship.¹ While the earliest references to this form of ethnocide, and even detailed accounts of the terror by direct witnesses, appeared sporadically in works published abroad (Conquest 1986), as well as in journalistic and publicistic writings from the period,² more in-depth historical studies, supported by a substantial documentary base, began to emerge only after 1991, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and consequently the decline of the totalitarian regime (Kul'chyts'kyi 2008; Smoliy 2009; Kas'yanov 2010; Serhiychuk 2016; Applebaum 2017; and others). Alongside written sources, such as decrees, directives and official reports, numerous oral testimonies by eyewitnesses and victims of the Holodomor also play a crucial role.

At present, a substantial body of evidence has been assembled that makes it possible to document and critically reassess the crimes of the Soviet regime, to establish the historical truth, and to convey it to the international community, particularly given that not all countries officially recognise the deliberate nature of the repressions and the man-made famine directed against the Ukrainian population. The consequences of these events remain insufficiently understood even in Ukrainian society.

Moreover, in the context of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, processes that may be interpreted as forms of ethnocide continue to affect the population of the occupied territories, while Ukraine as a whole is experiencing sustained aggression and facing an existential challenge.

The declared objective of Russia's military intervention, 'denazification', has been widely interpreted in the Ukrainian scholarly and public discourse as concealing intentions aimed at the destruction of the Ukrainian ethnic identity,

¹ An overview of the development of Holodomor studies since the late 1980s is provided in Andriewsky's article (Andriewsky 2015).

² For example: Ulas Samchuk's *Maria: A Chronicle of a Life* (Lviv, 1934); Vasyl Barka's *The Yellow Prince* (New York, 1963); the reports of Gareth Jones and the publications of Malcolm Muggeridge; as well as the publicist writings of Dmytro Dontsov.

thus continuing a trajectory associated with the unfinished policies of the Soviet regime, which may be understood in terms of ethnocide.

In order to counteract and ultimately halt such forms of violence, it is essential to ensure a comprehensive and visible dissemination of the historical truth, as well as to hold both past and present perpetrators accountable. In this process, eyewitness testimonies, much as in legal proceedings, should play a central role.

The facts of the mass physical destruction of innocent victims are well documented, as is evidenced by demographic statistics, which estimate that approximately four million Ukrainians died of famine in 1932–1934 alone (Wolowyna et al. 2016, 175–176). By contrast, the ethnocultural consequences, particularly the destruction of the spiritual foundations of Ukrainian society, are less immediately visible, and remain insufficiently understood. A profound and irreversible transformation affected ways of life, customary practices, and even patterns of the mentality.

For this reason, it is particularly important today, drawing on testimonies of eyewitnesses to this tragic period, to analyse the causes and consequences of the Holodomor within the broader context of Ukraine's cultural history, and in particular its folklore tradition. It is essential to understand what happened to traditional rituals and customs during the years of the Soviet terror, whether even the most elementary forms of intangible cultural life persisted, and whether songs continued to be heard.

It is evident that during the most severe period of deprivation, following collectivisation and the loss of basic means of subsistence, including food supplies, traditional practices were largely suspended, and were later unable to recover in their original form. At the same time, the resilience of the Ukrainian identity remained a remarkable phenomenon, persisting even under conditions of prolonged and destructive Russian occupation, and the so-called 'denazification'. This resilience is attested to by numerous testimonies of residents of the affected regions.

Historiographical Background

Focusing on the theme of the confrontation between traditional folk culture and the processes of collectivisation, repression and the Holodomor, it is important to consider several key publications on this subject that have appeared in Ukraine over recent decades. These are predominantly monographs and studies that compile and analyse oral-poetic and prose folklore genres, including narratives that document the tragedy itself, and testify to the persistence of folk creativity, even under the most extreme conditions.

One of the earliest such works is *The Eclipse of the Ukrainian Sun, or the Tragedy of the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in the Folklore of Ukraine* by Tetiana Kononchuk (Kononchuk 1998). The book presents proverbs, sayings, poems and oral narratives concerning the Holodomor and the transformative events of the 1930s, examining their reflection in the popular consciousness.

In 1999, the American ethnomusicologist and cultural scholar William Noll published the extensive monograph *The Transformation of Civil Society: An Oral History of Ukrainian Peasant Culture in the 1920s–1930s* (Noll 1999). Based on a large body of oral testimonies collected by a team of ethnographers led by Noll in Ukraine, this study offers a detailed and reliable account of the profound transformations in traditional social structures and cultural life resulting from Soviet ideology and repressions.³

In 2003, the Lviv-based scholar Vasyl Sokil published his own folklore recordings related to the Holodomor in the book *Ukrainians about the Famine of 1932–1933* (Sokil 2003). This topic remained central to his subsequent research, culminating in the comprehensive monograph *Folklore Prose about the Famine of the Twentieth Century in Ukraine: A Paradigm of the Text* (Sokil 2017), which analyses traditional narratives, legends, and oral memories concerning the famines of the first half of the 20th century.

In 2005, another Lviv scholar, Roman Kyrchiv, published the extensive article *The Tragedy of the Holodomor in Folklore Representation* (Kyrchiv 2005), which, like Noll's work, emphasises the destructive impact of the Holodomor on folk traditions, culture, oral memory, and the broader folkloric world-view of the Ukrainian peasantry.

This line of inquiry continues in later studies, such as Olesia Stasiuk's *The Genocide of Ukrainians: Deformation of Folk Culture* (Stasyuk 2008) and Liudmyla Ivannikova's article *Folklore Plots Incorporated into Oral Memorates about the Famine of 1932–1933* (Ivannikova 2021). In addition, valuable cultural and historical evidence, particularly eyewitness testimonies, is contained in recent documentary publications, including the archival collection *The Holodomor of 1932–1933: Genocide of the Ukrainian People. A Collection of Documents and Materials* (Holodomor 2025).

Furthermore, the theme of the Holodomor has been addressed in numerous interdisciplinary conferences and thematic volumes, both in Ukraine and abroad, many of which incorporate folkloristic perspectives.

³ The materials from these expeditions, primarily in the form of audio recordings and transcripts of interviews, have recently been made available on the online platform Great Transformations. William Noll's archive of Ukrainian village culture. See: <https://greattransformations-ua.org/>

The Stepan Myshanych folklore collection

A significant addition to published sources on the Holodomor is a recently rediscovered collection of folklore recordings from the Donetsk region and other parts of Ukraine, compiled by the prominent scholar Professor Stepan Myshanych (1936–2013). During his tenure at Donetsk National University (1991–2010), he assembled an extensive corpus of audio recordings made under his supervision by philology students as part of their fieldwork in folklore studies.

This collection comprises nearly 1,500 audio cassettes, accompanied by transcripts. All the materials were gathered according to a specifically developed methodology, properly catalogued, carefully transcribed, and systematically numbered.

Due to the increasingly complex political situation in the Donetsk region from the mid-2000s onwards, S. Myshanych, an ardent advocate of Ukrainian culture, began to experience growing pressure from the university administration and local authorities. As a result, he was compelled to relocate to his native Transcarpathia, taking with him more than 200 folders of folklore material, thereby effectively rescuing them from the risk of destruction.

In May 2022, during the first months of the ongoing full-scale war, this collection was transferred from Zakarpattia to the Mykola Lysenko Lviv National Music Academy.⁴ Over the past few years, researchers at the Advanced Research Laboratory of Musical Ethnology (LME) have been actively processing the collection, verifying, digitising and transcribing its contents, and publishing selected materials on various online platforms.⁵

During the fieldwork practice, as can be inferred from the content of the material, students relied on methodological guidelines, which facilitated the process and contributed to achieving more reliable results. In addition to documenting song repertoires, they typically asked questions on historical topics, most notably concerning the family background of respondents, the Second World War, and the Holodomor.

It can be assumed that, in the context of the activities of the Centre for East Ukrainian Ethnology established by S. Myshanych, his aim was to reconstruct a

⁴ The collection was donated by S. Myshanych's daughter Mariia Smilianska, to whom we express our sincere gratitude. We are also deeply grateful to S. Myshanych's brother, the Lviv-based ethnomusicologist Mykhailo Myshanych, who supported the initiative of the donation, and played an active role in transferring the collection to Lviv.

⁵ As of today, two projects based on the S. Myshanych Donetsk collection have been implemented with the participation of the Head of the Laboratory, Yurii Rybak, and the researchers Larysa Lukashenko and Lina Dobrianska (Stepan Myshanych's Collection. Electronic Archive of Ukrainian Folklore (see: <https://folklore-archive.org.ua/subfund/3>) and Donetsk collection of Stepan Myshanych. Digital archive of folklore (see: <https://folklore.kh.ua/site/collection/2>).

more accurate historical narrative of the Donetsk region, and to restore historical justice regarding its Ukrainian identity. For this purpose, he collected testimonies from rural inhabitants as credible and often unique sources of information.

As a result, narratives concerning the Holodomor constitute a substantial portion of the material in the S. Myshanych collection, and cover extensive territories where the consequences of the genocide were particularly severe. These materials make it possible to significantly enrich the existing knowledge about the causes, course and consequences of this tragic event in mid-20th century Ukrainian history, particularly its profoundly destructive impact on the traditional culture.

Undoubtedly, the most valuable are the accounts of direct witnesses; however, testimonies transmitted by others, who recount the experiences of relatives or acquaintances whose families were also affected by the Holodomor, should not be underestimated.

Traditional musical culture in the context of the Holodomor

As is well known, in the first half of the 20th century, Ukraine experienced three major famines, in 1921–1922, 1932–1933 and 1946–1947. While the first and the last of these were largely caused by natural factors, primarily poor harvests, the famine of 1933 was of a distinctly man-made character, and, as has been repeatedly demonstrated, was an act of ethnocide.

In geographical terms, according to the political borders of the time, the first two famines affected primarily the northern, central and eastern regions of Ukraine, which were then under Soviet rule. By contrast, the famine of 1947, although less severe, extended across the entire country, including the recently annexed western territories.

The most severe impact was felt in the central regions, which were predominantly agrarian in their economic structure. Deprived of livestock, agricultural tools, and all means of subsistence, peasants had virtually no chance of surviving the winter, and consequently these regions suffered the highest levels of mortality and hardship. In contrast, survival was somewhat more likely in the vicinity of industrial centres, where, for example, workers in Donetsk received minimal food rations. For this reason, a significant number of people migrated internally to the Donetsk region from various parts of Ukraine, fleeing the conditions of collectivised agriculture and seeking basic means of survival.

Drawing on numerous eyewitness testimonies of the Holodomor, including those preserved in the collection of S. Myshanych, it is possible to reconstruct an

extremely dramatic picture of the conditions and means of survival of Ukrainian peasants, those who found themselves at the epicentre of the tragedy. Their diet consisted of various substitutes, including beet tops, goosefoot, reeds, nettles, chaff, husks, sorrel, acorns, leaves, and other wild plants. They also consumed animals such as dogs, cats, ground squirrels, mice and rats, while in coastal areas small fish (such as sprat) often became the primary source of sustenance. Some of the most disturbing accounts also include references to cases of cannibalism:⁶

Even now it is frightening to think that the famine might return: may it never come back. And if it does return, then it would be better if everyone were killed at once, because there is nothing worse in the world than hunger. They ate children, they ate dogs, and whatever else ... (1374, Hannivka Dn).

It is evident that under such conditions, traditional culture effectively came to a halt, not so much due to official prohibitions, but rather as a result of the physical and moral exhaustion of the population. Owing to mass mortality, weakened and traumatised peasants were unable to perform one of the most fundamental ancestral rituals, burial. Dead people lay everywhere, and at best were interred in mass graves. In addition to all these hardships, people were deprived of the religious dimension of life, which might have offered some support in such difficult circumstances. As a result of anti-religious policies, church buildings, key centres of spiritual life, were either completely destroyed or, less frequently, converted into food storage facilities, or even clubs (1680, Blahodatne, Dn). Peasants attempted to resist such arbitrariness in vain, as their efforts often resulted in repressions and various forms of physical violence.

However, the strong continuity of previously cultivated rituals, customs and songs could not disappear in a single year of the Holodomor. Young people still sought to organise at least some form of leisure, finding in it a measure of consolation: 'We wanted to go out and have fun, even though there was hunger' (746, Yelyzavetivka, Dn); 'Although life in the village was hard, we still found time for all kinds of entertainment, and everything was good' (1799, Troitske, Dn). Girls even took care of their appearance; for example, they painted the fronts of their boots with white clay (746, Yelyzavetivka, Dn).

The resilience of tradition under conditions of total repression, collectivisation and famine was often strikingly evident. Despite the extreme hardship and pressure from the authorities, peasants continued to observe major holidays.

⁶ Here and throughout the article, excerpts from student transcripts in the S. Myshanych Collection (Archive LME) are cited. Each quotation is followed in parentheses by the archival storage unit number, the locality, and an abbreviated form of the region: Dnpr (Dnipropetrovsk region), Dn (Donetsk region), Khark (Kharkiv region), Cherk (Cherkasy region) and Khm (Khmelnitskyi region).

In areas where the famine was somewhat less severe, they even sang Christmas carols and New Year ritual songs (1430, Novoukrainka, Dn). In many villages, it was recorded that although people had no food they did not stop singing (1502, Prechystivka, Dn; 1378, Novoandriivka, Dn):

Song was everything to us: it was our bread, our salt, our water. We worked, we spun, we knitted, my sister and I, and we sang. We never grieved that there was no bread on the table, that we had nothing to eat that day. We knew that we had sung today, and tomorrow, God willing, there would be a piece of bread. We would eat a little, and go to work with songs. Songs accompanied us to work and from work. We went to work singing, we came back singing, and at home as well. In the evening we would sit and work: mother spun, I knitted, my sister did something too, and there was song with us day and night. We would just lie down, and my sister, lying there, would sing in her sleep, she sang ... (829, Karlivka, Dn).

Let me tell you. I used to live in the Zaporizhzhia region, and when I came here, we girls would gather, and the steppe was far away, so they would send us there for a whole week, to the threshing machine. We unloaded and threshed the grain until the dew had dried. And once the dew was gone, we would sing. We sang all day long, throughout the whole week. But now it is no longer like that. We unloaded from the reaping machine and fed the drum of the thresher. We started work at twelve. But even so, we sang. Song was in first place. We went to work singing, came back singing, and we sang in the evening as well (943, Olhynka, Dn).

No matter how we lived, we always went to work and came back from work with songs; we felt cheerful then, more cheerful than now (964, Makiivka, Dn).

Even though there was famine, it was joyful, there was singing everywhere, not like now (883, Yakymivka, Khark).

We are originally from here, from the village of Serebrianka in the Donetsk region. I was born here, and so was my sister. We had a very large family, a big clan, musical and beautiful, and from early childhood we learned to sing Ukrainian songs. And Ukrainian songs, since old times, have always been somewhat sorrowful. Well, people sang about what they experienced in their lives. My grandfather on my mother's side sang in the church choir. He was an alto, he had a very good voice. He taught us to sing, so that we would sing properly, do everything as it should be done. And my grandfather on my father's side played the violin very well. My great-grandfather on my father's side was an icon painter, he painted beautiful icons. I did not know my great-grandfather, of course, but I knew my grandfather the violinist, he played very, very well. In the evenings we often gathered as a family and sang songs. My mother and father sang very well, as far as I remember, they always had gatherings in the evenings, and they sang beautifully together. We learned to sing in such a way that we could combine work with singing, combine the useful with the pleasant, as they say now. Back then we did the same, too: for example, when we were shelling corn, separating the kernels from the cob, we would sit and sing songs (1222, Serebrianka, Dn).

It is very difficult to recall that period when there was war. Our boys were at the front, and we girls would gather on the village green. We were poorly dressed and hungry, but we sang songs, remembering our loved ones, our brothers and sisters who were at the front, and we sang songs: both sad and joyful, whatever came to mind (817, Mykilske, Cherk).

In '47 there was a famine. Our family was poor, very poor, there was hunger. Our father died, and three of us remained with our mother. When we grew up a bit, we went to work. We would go to work on oxen and sing; wherever we stopped for five minutes, we sang; on the way back from work, we sang. And now ... Back then we were poorer, life was harder. Now it seems a little better, but people no longer sing, not as they used to (1318, Antonivka, Dn).

The years '46 and '47 were so difficult, Lord ... There were seven of us, six remained: our father died. It happened that we would go to the orchard, eat leaves, and the younger ones would lie down to sleep, because there was nothing to eat. And still we went out and sang. We sang all kinds of songs: good ones and difficult ones, the kind that were sung after the war (1378, Novoandriivka, Dn).

Song fulfilled not only an aesthetic function, it was an integral part of life itself; and under the extreme conditions of the Holodomor it also assumed a kind of therapeutic role, helping to save deeply distressed people from psychological breakdown. One such example is the following account:

I had a grandmother, my father's mother, and she was from the Poltava region. She sang very beautifully, and I remember this ... even though I was very little. She had just died, and my mother had died as well, and she would gather us children ... And what is striking, I will say this now, my mother died in June 1947, and my youngest brother was one year and two months old. Our grandmother had taught us to sing so well that he sat there, hungry, not dressed, barefoot, while they were carrying our mother out of the yard, and he sat there singing: 'The sun is setting, night is falling, come out, girl, my heart longs for you' (774, Olhynka, Dn).

Even in the most difficult year of 1933, as well as somewhat later, and likewise during the little better conditions of the German occupation, people continued to observe their traditions, particularly when it came to the important ritual of a wedding:

Although life in the village was hard, we still found time for all kinds of leisure, and everything felt good (1799, Troitske, Dnpr).

The wedding was celebrated very poorly. It was 1933, a terrible time of famine: there was no bread, nothing at all, people had no livestock, because it was all taken away. It was such a time, a very bad time. And I was to have a wedding, it was supposed to take place on Sunday. But what could my mother prepare, when there was nothing at all: no bread, no flour, nothing? My mother said: 'Run to the field, the grain is already ripening, the wheat is ready. Take some wheat.' So we threshed it roughly and cooked

a kind of porridge. There would be porridge. There was no bread, no meat either, because there was no money to buy anything.

I had a cow, so my mother milked it and cooked the porridge with milk. And then she thought of something else: the goose had goslings. They left the goslings and slaughtered the goose. From the goose they made aspic, and the groom arrived with his companions. My older sister brought a small loaf of bread for my wedding. We cut the bread and put out a small piece for each person. We ate some of the wheat porridge, it was actually very good. And a neighbour brought some ripe cherries and added them to the table. That was our feast. There was nothing to drink, because there was no money to buy anything. And at the groom's wedding, it was the same, just that same porridge (1665, Sosnovyi Khutir, Khm).

As soon as conditions began to improve and the famine subsided, life and folk traditions were immediately restored: 'After 1933 things became better. Schools provided hot breakfasts. In the family, one could hear the father and mother singing songs more often' (1343, Manuilove, Dn).

After the famine of 1947 and in the years that followed, folk traditions, and folklore culture as a whole, began to decline rapidly and irreversibly. In addition to the already persistent tensions with the state authorities and the Church, new factors came into play, including technological progress and the expansion of mass communication. The advance of modern civilisation, particularly the emergence of radio, television and print media (books and periodicals), increasingly displaced folklore from active use, while various forms of so-called amateur artistic activity (*chudozhnia samodiyalnist*) reflected the authentic tradition only partially.

Artificial stage representations, combined with the ideological framework of the Soviet regime, were generally far removed from their genuine foundations,⁷ leading ultimately either to the transformation of folk music into a staged, artificial form, or to its complete disappearance.⁸

So-called brigade choirs, formed primarily by women workers, became widespread under the conditions of rural collective farms during the Soviet period. They performed their native repertoire less frequently, often singing instead newly composed songs marked by socialist ideology:

⁷ For a more detailed discussion of how traditional Ukrainian celebrations were suppressed under the Soviet regime and replaced by artificial Soviet rituals, see Lukashenko (2025, 249–251).

⁸ Unfortunately, the consequences of the socialist regime's impact on folklore in Ukrainian society remain perceptible today, as folk creativity is often regarded either as a relic of the past, or, at best, as a raw resource for academic or popular (commercial) music-making. A telling example of such an attitude is the negative reception of the performance by the traditional singer Oleksii Zaiets on the television competition *Holos Krainy*, which is analysed within a broader socio-cultural framework in Maria Sonevytsky's study (Sonevytsky 2019, 85–88).

Oh, in the field it is not a plough but a tractor ploughing,
And behind it a row of seven ploughs it leads.
Young fellows were pondering a thought:
We shall live, brothers, in communes.
The old world has died, the old God has died,
A new year is crossing our threshold.
Rise up, old man, and you too, old woman,
We shall go out into the world for the celebration.
There are no more masters, no more fools,
Free tillers are going into the commune.
And what kind of star is that, what sun is shining—
It is the commune already ploughing in the field
(1250, Donetsk, Dn).

However, away from the stage, such songs were never actually sung; on the contrary, people tended to satirise or reflect with sorrow on contemporary realities:

Oh, where have I ended up, fields and fields all around,
Strange fellows everywhere, no one greets me here.
Oh, where have I ended up, bricks and more bricks,
And that is why, until payday, there is not enough for food
(903, Stepne, Dn).

Rise up, Lenin, take a look
At how we've lived on the collective farm:
The house is crooked, the barn is crooked,
And the mare has only one eye
(974, Yasna Poliana, Dn).

When Lenin was dying,
He gave Stalin his command:
'Make sure you give no bread,
And show no lard to the people'
(974, Yasna Poliana, Dn).

At times, older songs were also reinterpreted, with their themes adapted to contemporary realities. For example, one widely known folk song reflects the longing of a daughter, married or working in service, for her parental home. In a later version, it refers to departure, or, as it was more commonly called at the time, recruitment, to the Donbas:

Remember me, mother, at the threshold in the entryway,
And I will remember you on the distant road.
Remember me, mother, at home at the dinner table,
And I will remember you when I arrive in the Donbas
(649, Zvanivka, Dn).

There is a widespread stereotype that after the Holodomor, the Donetsk region was largely repopulated by migrants from Russia, while the local population had almost entirely perished. In fact, as is evidenced by material from the S. Myshanych collection, a significant number of indigenous inhabitants survived in their villages, or relocated to larger cities, and the majority of newcomers originated from other regions of Ukraine. Nevertheless, policies of Russification and the suppression of the Ukrainian language and culture had a profound effect. Even where they constituted a minority, newcomers often dominated the autochthonous population, because they enjoyed various forms of support from the authorities.⁹

Despite such difficult circumstances, Ukrainian songs continued to be sung and traditions were observed even in a largely Russified environment. In addition to oral testimonies, this is confirmed by a general analysis of the repertoire preserved in the S. Myshanych collection: apart from a relatively small number of popular hits and *chastushkas*, the material recorded across the Donetsk region, including its regional centre Donetsk, consists predominantly of Ukrainian songs, recognised for their aesthetic refinement, both in terms of musical expression and poetic text.

Thus, in defiance of the ethnocide of the Soviet period, the musical tradition of the Donetsk region proved remarkably resilient. Moreover, it helped people to survive during the years around the Holodomor and in wartime: through song, it alleviated the hardships of daily life, satirised the so-called ‘benefits’ of the Soviet system, and despite the pressure of prohibitions and persecution, preserved rituals and Christian culture. Despite the widespread use of Russian, the region’s traditional musical culture remained predominantly Ukrainian well into the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Conclusions

In summary, it can be stated that the unique Donetsk collection of S. Myshanych constitutes a highly valuable source for Ukrainian culture and history. The numerous narratives of the inhabitants of the Donetsk region concerning the development of this area, as well as their testimonies about the Holodomor and other historical events, represent compelling and reliable documentary evidence of the Soviet occupation and terror in this territory.

In particular, the cultural content of the collection confirms that, in its modern phase, the traditional culture of the Donetsk region has undergone a series

⁹ In the administrative sphere, pro-Ukrainian candidates had virtually no prospects for career advancement, except for those who conformed strictly to Soviet regulations, joined the Communist Party, and renounced any expression of national identity.

of serious trials, the most devastating of which were undoubtedly the Holodomor and the associated collectivisation, war, anti-religious policies, Russification, the postwar imposition of artificially constructed Soviet culture, and finally the relentless advance of modernisation.

It is important to note that under the impact of such traumatic events, the folklore heritage has by now suffered irreparable destruction and profound transformation, ultimately ceasing to exist in its authentic form. While the decline of tradition is often determined by objective globalising factors, in this case the impossibility of its study and transmission, even in secondary forms, was largely the result of the aggressive policies of the occupying regime.

It is also evident that the remnants of tradition that were not entirely destroyed during the Soviet period have continued to pose an obstacle to the spread of the so-called '*russskiy mir*'. In recent years of full-scale war, alongside Ukrainian-speaking inhabitants, Ukrainian culture and song, some of the most expressive markers of the national identity, have likewise been systematically targeted and suppressed.

As for the Ukrainian people, there is hope that these severe trials will ultimately contribute to the strengthening of the nation. In this context, the cultural dimension, as a powerful component of identity, should serve as a foundation for both resilience in the present and development in the future. For this reason, it is of crucial importance to study and publish archive recordings that unequivocally attest to the continuity of the Ukrainian folk tradition in this region, thereby upholding the historical truth. The Donetsk region is Ukraine!

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TRADICINĖ DONECKO SRITIES IR GRETIMŲ VIETŲ KULTŪRA HOLODOMORO METU: STEPANO MYŠANYČIAUS KOLEKCIJOS DUOMENIMIS

Santrauka

XX a. pirmojoje pusėje Ukrainoje įvyko trys dideli badmečiai – 1921–1922, 1932–1933 ir 1946–1947 m., padarę reikšmingą įtaką ir tradicinės kultūros išlikimui. Folkloras buvo smarkiai sunaikintas tiek dėl ideologinio sovietų valdžios spaudimo, tiek dėl globalizacijos veiksnių įtakos. Nemaža dalis liaudies kūrybos išnyko be pėdsakų, nes dėl akademinų tyrimų slopinimo ir mokslininkų persekiojimo ji nebuvo tinkamai dokumentuota ar perduodama net antrinėmis formomis. Tik dėl liaudies kultūros turtingumo ir nepaprasto atsparumo ilgalaikėms represijoms ir draudimams iki šių dienų išliko pakankamai medžiagos, kuri atskleidžia autentišką istorinį ir etnokultūrinį Ukrainos vaizdą ir, svarbiausia, nesuteikia jokio pagrindo šiuolaikinėms Rusijos pretenzijoms į šias teritorijas.

Holodomoro tema užima svarbią vietą žymaus mokslininko Stepano Myšanyčiaus (1936–2013) folkloro kolekciijoje, surinktoje Donecko nacionaliniame universitete remiantis studentų lauko įrašais iš įvairių Donecko srities ir gretimų vietovių. 1991–2010 m., vadovaujami šio patyrusio mokslininko, studentai surinko tūkstančius dainų ir sakytinės tautosakos pavyzdžių, išsaugotų beveik 1 500 garso kasečių kartu su jų transkripcijomis. 2010 m. S. Myšanyčius šią medžiagą išgabeno į Užkarpatę, kad ją išsaugotų. Dabartinio plataus masto Rusijos ir Ukrainos karo metu ji vėliau buvo perduota Mykolos Lysenko Lvivo nacionalinei muzikos akademijai.

Atsiminimai apie Holodomorą buvo užfiksuoti iš tiesioginių liudininkų arba perduoti artimų giminaičių, kurių kiekvieną šis sovietinis teroras paveikė skirtingu mastu. Svarbu tai, kad visi įrašai yra kruopščiai dokumentuojami, todėl – kartu su istoriniais dokumentais – jie turėtų būti įrodymų medžiaga nustatant atsakomybę už vieną didžiausių XX amžiaus nusikaltimų.

Tradicinė kultūra Holodomorą ištėvė labai sunkiai, iš dalies išnykdamą kartu su talentingiausiais jos nešėjais, o XX a. antrojoje pusėje patyrė didelę transformaciją, įskaitant ryškų akademizacijos procesą (scenos formos, dirbtinė įtaka). Kiekvieno badmečio folkloro praktikos buvo laikinai sustabdytos, tačiau pamažu ir netikėtai atgimė. Kaimo gyventojai nepriėmė ideologiškai primestų meninėsraiškos formų; pasitelkdami satyrines reinterpretacijas ir šnekamąją poeziją, jie aštriai reagavo į savo laikmečio realijas.

S. Myšanyčiaus kolekcijos medžiaga aiškiai rodo, kad Donecko srities ir kitų rytinių Ukrainos regionų gyventojai net ir sunkiausiomis sąlygomis – įskaitant Holodomorą – liko ištikimi savo paveldėtoms tradicijoms: jie toliau laikėsi apeigų, išlaikė papročius, teikė aiškią pirmenybę ukrainietiškomis dainomis ir kalbėjo tik ukrainietišškai. Šie faktai yra akivaizdūs, nes jie labai svarbūs Ukrainos visuomenės atsparumui ir stiprinimui dabartiniame istoriniame kontekste, kai ji susiduria su Rusijos agresija.