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Peculiar Feminine Ideal in the Culture of Galicia-Volhynia State

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Abstract--Based on artifacts discovered in Western Ukraine, in this paper, we attempt to trace back the pattern of feminine ideal in the culture of Galicia-Volhynia State. Our study reveals peculiar social and cultural relations between males and females in the society of medieval Ukraine-Rus at the then material culture and mythological mentality level. We study the things that surrounded Ruthenian women, namely, items of clothing and accessories which were conceived as expressions of the world-building concept where the preference is given to the categories of orderliness and habitability, wisdom, family, and community. Given its sign and symbolic affiliation with the cultural significance area, the ornamental component of the medieval costume complex was put to semiotic analysis. We applied the cultural approach with its specific axiological interpretation of any instances of human social and cultural life-sustaining activity.

Keywords--archetype, art, culture, ideal, mythopoetic perception, pattern, tradition.

Introduction

Based on the analysis of recent historical and archival, demographic, statistical, and especially archaeological materials from the western territories of Ukraine-Rus, the distinctive pattern of not only peculiar feminine ideal but also gender differentiation in the culture of Ancient Halych is outlined as one of the significant scientific challenges not only in studying the cultural context of the specified period in national history but also in substantial enhancement of gender theory and practice. The study of the costume phenomenon, as well as its components as media of socially significant cultural meanings, is central to the process of such research.

The paper aims to reveal peculiarities of the female social standing and her appearance as an expression of the aesthetic ideal in the medieval Ruthenian (Ukrainian) society, primarily in its southwestern territories. For this purpose, we defined the following tasks:

- Regardless of historical variability of the feminine ideal, to identify stable characteristics of such ideal significant for the Ukrainian community and recognized as a national value;
- Based on archaeological materials from the territories of the medieval Kingdom of Galicia-Volhynia, to analyze, among other things, its decorative counterpart as a social and cultural phenomenon associated with social and cultural standings, gender roles, social and cultural standards of the period under study;
- To trace back the historical duration of the traditional concept of feminine ideal and its visual signs appealing to the mentality of Ukrainians.

Method

Archaeological discoveries made by Ukrainian researchers in recent decades present strong evidence that in olden times the Precarpathian territory was in the influence zone of Trypillian culture. "From the perspective of world civilization process, Trypillya can be defined as a farming civilization (protocivilization)," archaeologist Mykhailo Videiko points out, "whose founders laid the basis for civilization living in the territories of Carpatho-Transnistria" (Videiko, 2011). Archaeological excavations, carried out by Larysa Krushelnytska on the site of ancient settlement in the village of Spas in Kolomyia Raion of Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, discovered remains of mud-brick buildings, middens, numerous fragments of dishes, and anthropomorphic figurines in clay. Clay with an admixture of cereal grains or coarse ground flour suggests an association between Trypillian works of plastic arts and the cult of productivity and fertility. Ceramic female figurines with welcoming expressions, made by Trypillian porters, embodied the cult of Foremother Goddess (a universal image known since the late Paleolithic). The figure of Foremother Goddess dominated Trypillian everyday life and religious worship as the guard of the home, the protector of all sorts, a source of new life, order, and welfare. She was the main figure in religious rituals.

The building of shrines (sanctuaries) in the Precarpathian region is associated with the period of transition from the primitive system to Proto-Slavic class

society when pagan religion and ritual were gradually changing. Beliefs and cults became more complicated; alongside worshipping natural objects, worship was conducted in special religious buildings, whose structure became increasingly more elaborated (there were sanctuary caves with shrines, sites for various designations) (Diachenko & Menotti, 2012; d'Entremont, 2015). In 2006–2011, the Carpathian archaeological expedition of the Institute of History and Political Science of the Precarpathian National University discovered over 40 rock sanctuaries and ritual stones with petroglyphs in the Pokutsko-Bukovynian Carpathians, Chornohora, and Gorgany. The petroglyphs include astral, solar, lunar, linear, geometric, cross-shaped, anthropomorphic, and other images. Stones with footprints and throne chairs also served some specific purposes.

Results and Discussion

Comparative and semiotic analysis of petroglyphs and structural elements of rock sanctuaries revealed their close connection with the cult of Great Goddess, who in chronicles and folklore sources is called Zhiva, Diva, Dana, Berehynia, Zhytnia Baba, Rozhanytsia, Lada, Slava, etc. According to M. Kuhutiak, the expedition leader, “they are genetically related to the sacred code of Cucuteni-Trypillia, objectified in numerous archaeological finds”. The most significant petroglyphic monument of the Carpathian region with sun worship symbols, the mountain of Pysanyi Kamin, came to researchers’ attention rather late. In the 1930s, they discovered a unique relief graphic petroglyphic complex that presents the vertical structure of the religious worldview of the ancient population of the Carpathians. The religious cosmological semiotic system, represented here, has a tripartite structure: the upper (birds, sunrise, cosmic tree, moon, stars), middle, earthly (bear), and lower, underground (fish) worlds. The content of the images and symbols depicted here suggests a reverence for the Great Goddess, the mistress of Heaven, the Earth, and the underworld. Steles with petroglyphs were, apparently, a mysterious sacral and ritual center of the sanctuary, where women were expected to participate in certain family and tribal ritual activities (Kubiček, 1994; Von Solms & Von Solms, 2004).

In the territories of Ancient Halych, archaeologists discovered serpentine charms, which got widespread along with engolpion crosses, demonstrating the transformation of ancient pagan images and their viability in the Christian culture. Ruthenian serpentine charms are double-sided pendants in the form of lockets with images of Christ, the Virgin, or saints on one side, and an assemblage in the form of a human head surrounded by snakes (an image resembling Medusa) on the other. On these charms, Christian canonical iconography combined with pagan images is an example of the transition period of Ruthenian Orthodoxy, a complex syncretism of Christianity and ancient beliefs. A silver serpentine charm, featuring Archangel Michael on the one side and Medusa on the other, was discovered in the ruins of the Church of the Savior in Halych. This art piece is an important monument of Ruthenian gold artwork, featuring on its front the Archistratigus Michael with strong outspread wings holding a rod in his right hand. Tatyana Nikolaeva focused on the side with the Christian image, pointing out that their first type includes amulets with the figure of the Archistratigus Michael. At present, there are five subtypes of serpentine

charms with the Archangel Michael dating from the 11th–14th centuries ([Nikolaeva & Chernetsov, 1991](#)).

The reverse side of the charm is decorated with the image of a human head surrounded by seven two-headed snake-like creatures suggestive of dragons. The assemblage is centered, with serpent bodies radiating from the human head and 14 serpent heads growing out of seven trunks, facing one side, giving an impression of their circular motion. Researcher M. Fihol believed that the silver serpentine charm was discovered by Lev Lavretskyi during the 1882 excavations of foundations of the Church of the Savior mentioned in the annals.

Emiliia Zarubii, a Lviv researcher, argued that the Galician jewelry piece belonged to Euphrosyne, daughter of Galician prince Yaroslav Osmomysl (1153–1187) and Osmomysl' wife Olha, daughter of Yurii Dovhorukyi. She got married to Prince Igor of Novgorod-Seversk and died in about 1202. It is the lamentation by Yaroslavna-Euphrosyne that the author of “The Lay of Igor’s Campaign” told us about ([Zarubiy, 2009](#)). V. Danylenko, B. Rybakov, M. Chmykhov, and Yu. Shylov interprets the Trypillian serpent symbol, as well as snake-like assemblages, as symbols of prosperity, family welfare, solar revolution, the cosmic marriage of Heaven and Earth, agrarian cycle. Sun worshipers believe that the mythopoetic personality of the sun dragon-pangolin maintains the order, arrangement of Cosmos, and life on the Earth.

Significantly, the combination of female and serpentine images is common in Trypillian anthropomorphic works of plastic arts, though different from ancient Galician serpentine charms. However, in both cases, as well as in numerous Ukrainian ritual songs of sun-worship, a woman becomes involved in (and often, manages) global and significant processes of the annual cycle, solar calendar changes, thus demonstrating her proactive attitude, power, influence, staying in the aura of male solar energy. In the 10th–11th centuries, Ruthenians widely used so-called lunulas, associated with moon worshiping. They were worn by women and girls as earrings, mainly as protection against evil spells. It is interesting that in the period of so-called “dual faith” Galician craftsmen made lunulas with a cross attached to the center of a pagan piece of jewelry ([Taras, 2006](#)).

People of Galicia-Volhynia Rus viewed cruciform symbols as the power of heavenly fire, associated with a solar deity. Archaeological findings of Halych and other princely cities indicate that wearing lunulas with a cross was considered a remedy against illnesses, protection against misfortunes from all four sides of the world. Early Slavic monuments of the Galician land have revealed lunulas dating back to the 6th–7th centuries. Archaeologist Volodymyr Baran discovered such a monument of jewelry in the ancient settlement of Ripniv II in Kamianka-Buzka Raion of Lviv Oblast. The lunula is made of a thin bronze plate and decorated with dimples on its front side ([BaRaN, 1972](#)).

Lunulas became popular in Galicia-Volhynia Rus in the 10th century and survived till the 13th century. Some researchers have undertaken a special study of these pieces of jewelry and developed their typology. The largest number of lunulas was discovered on the territory of princely Halych in comparison with all other towns of Southwestern Rus. In the 12th–13th centuries, they were manufactured in

princely Terebovlia, as evidenced by foundry mold found here, meant for the production of such jewelry. The two-sided mold is made of marl. One side of a rectangular tile has a mold for casting lunulas with eight granules grouped in the form of the letter П. There is a funnel-like duct for casting the lunula's eye. On the reverse, there is a mold for casting across with eyes, rounded bulges at the ends, and the letter X in the center (Darkevich, 1960).

Researchers are particularly interested in the combination of a lunula with a cross. Using the lunula from the site of ancient settlement near the village of Chornivka, archaeologist Ihor Voznyi traced the phenomenon of dual faith, in particular, in technique application and motifs. The center of the lunula depicts three phases of solar motion (East, South, West). Its edges are decorated with stylized heads of snakes, the above-mentioned pagan symbol. Among the pseudo-granulation, four crosses can be seen, which undoubtedly refer to Christian symbols (Vozny, 2009).

Researches consider upside-down crescent moon pendants to be pagan symbols of marriage, which were mostly worn by girls (Zarubiy, 2009). The combination of two solar symbols forms the cosmological motif of "Sun and Moon marriage". Oftentimes, they are associated in ritual songs with bride and groom or even husband and wife. Correlation between heavenly bodies and marriage that is descended from the times of Trypillian civilization is regarded not only as an attempt to emphasize the importance of marital parity, compared with cosmological one, but also the need for proportional distribution of female and male energies, gender balance. Thus, assemblages with symmetric heavenly bodies should be interpreted as an expression of a spiritual society, where the married couple must continue their family line in harmony and preserve the human race. Ruthenians, as well as their ancestors, viewed marriage as a religious necessity and a social duty, which should receive parents' blessing. This tradition has survived among the Ukrainians until now. It is noteworthy that the crescent (lunula) belongs to Holy Mother's attributes. Canonical Christian writings suggest that the Virgin is identified as the woman of the Apocalypse ("a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head - a crown of twelve stars"). In Western European iconography, the iconographic type of the Virgin as the Queen of Heaven (the Virgin Mary standing on the moon) images became popular (Shkolna et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2018). Thus, the crescent moon pendant looks seamless in the context of Christian symbolism, and its combination with the cross is explained by the inseparable union of Christ and the Virgin.

Carpathian region is characterized by the building of early Christian monasteries near ancient pagan rock ritual centers and mountain sanctuaries (Dora, Maniava, Serebnii Bereziv) and in villages of Nazavyziv and Hrabovets, near ancient settlements (sanctuaries) of the 10th–12th centuries (Nikolaeva & Chernetsov, 1991). According to researcher V. Taras, medieval monasteries followed the design of pagan ritual centers. Idols, shrines and heathen temples, sacred groves on hills with healing and health-giving springs were replaced by a church, or monastic cells with a refectory, or a garden, or a cemetery (Taras, 2006).

Bogdan Tomenchuk, an archaeologist from Ivano-Frankivsk, managed to find the location of land-based wooden monastic settlements, concentrated near princely cities of Southwestern Rus, especially around Halych. At the end of the 20th century, the researcher discovered and partially investigated the ruins of ten ancient monasteries near the princely capital. In the Mniskyi (Monastic) garden natural boundary, the researcher came across one of the largest cemeteries of ancient times. Three female burial places contained pieces of clothing materials with orphrey around the neck and on the chest. Along with the embroidery, there were six buttons (Elbakidze & Angelstam, 2007; Ivanov, 2016). The extant pieces of clothing materials contain very intricate, artistic “entrelac” ornamental motifs.

Excavations have proven that not only monks were buried in the cemetery, but also other citizens of Halych with different social standing and property. The burial place of a young woman was especially rich. Traces of chiltse (forehead decoration) with golden embroidery testify to her noble origin. On the right forearm, there were 13 sewn silver-gilt plates with the image of St. Panteleimon. There were 6 more buttons on the neck. Fabrics of Byzantine origin, made of golden thread, were often used in Rus to decorate head-dress (so-called “gold-heads”) worn by women belonging to prince and boyar elite. Excavation of the Assumption Cathedral in Halych near the sarcophagus of Prince Yaroslav Osmomysl, carried out by Ya. Pasternak revealed a burial place of a woman aged 18-20. “On the young woman’s forehead,” the archaeologist describes his unusual discovery, “there is a well-preserved chiltse from cross-lineolate brocade, 310 mm long, with a gold-thread embroidered motif of two turned aside back-to-back winged spirals, repeated alternatively six times in reverse.” (Taras, 2006).

A similar ornamental motif was widely used in the fine arts of Kyivan Rus, in particular, in the frescoes and mosaics of the St. Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv and the Savior Cathedral in Chernihiv. The gold-thread embroidered chiltse, discovered in Krylos, is a Byzantine work dating from the early or middle 12th century (Taras, 2006). At the cemetery near apses of the Assumption Cathedral in Halych, Ya. Pasternak discovered a rich burial place, which he registered under number 26 and described in the following way: “The forehead of this woman was once decorated with a chiltse – gold-head, with only golden threads remaining intact in several places on the skull, as well as bronze gilded plates in the form of a tiny three-leaved lily once sewn on the chiltse. One of them lay to the left of the skull, three on the forehead, and several to the right of the skull, along with a piece of gold-head. On the neck of the skeleton, there were remains of a stand-up brocaded collar, fastened with several bronze gilded ball-shaped buttons, 8 mm in diameter” (Pasternak, 1998). The researcher identified the burial place in Halych as boyars’ one. According to him, the tradition of making gilded plates in the form of lilies or with their images spread to Ukraine from the Byzantine Empire (Pasternak, 1998).

The inventory of the female burial place of Ruthenian times, discovered near the village of Kryliv of Dubno Raion, Rivne Oblast, also included a female piece of jewelry – diadem. Brocaded collars, discovered in burial place No.26 near the Assumption Cathedral, were also found in other city cemeteries of princely Halych, namely Tsarynka natural boundary in Krylos, Hrobyska-Mniskyi garden natural boundary in Zalukva, Monastery Mountain natural boundary in the

village of Pitrych. Archaeological findings from Southwestern Podillia and Pokuttia were found to provide the greatest amount of material for the reconstruction of women's head-dress of the 11th–13th centuries (Tomenchuk, 2006). Interestingly, headwear similar to Ruthenian headdresses still existed in this locality in the 20th century, especially in the wedding ceremony.

The respect accorded to the female deceased followed to the after-life in the Kingdom of Galicia-Volhynia is impressive. This is evidenced by both the proximity of male and female burials and their location in the monastery territory (Gutiérrez, 1998; Crozier & Chapman, 1984). As to gold-brocaded garments and gold jewelry in graves of women, not only do they indicate nobility, but also expose the archaic tradition of granting extraordinary qualities to an object through gold items or epithets “gold”, “clear”, meaning “pure”, “extraordinary”, “exclusive”. In mythopoetic perception, gold suggests solar clarity, shiny and warm energy associated with the scope of male presence and activities (Carlson, 2000; Baumann et al., 2011). In Christian symbolism, gold is first and foremost an embodiment of light, materialized divine radiance, pure and imperishable spirit of the Lord. Following the example of Princess Anna Yaroslavna of Kyiv, Ruthenian women from noble families found their self-expression in politics, i.e., at the external level, while preserving their femininity and thus contributing to the consolidation of mutually complementary male and female principles in Western Rus.

Conclusion

Interpretation of the material presented in the paper has led us to draw the following conclusions: drawing on the pattern and mode of female behavior of the specified historic period, we can reveal certain social and cultural peculiarities of that time, such as ethical values, attitude towards right and wrong, the coexistence of the order with the chaos, vision of fate, peculiar world-building pattern, correlation between heavenly and earthly values. The things that surrounded Ruthenian women, namely, items of clothing and accessories, reflect the concept of world-building where the preference is given to the categories of orderliness and habitability, decency, sense of community. The female way of self-expression on the Ukrainian lands of the medieval era is consonant with the epic and majestic personified image of Sophia (Wisdom), embodied in the Virgin Orans icon filled not only with wisdom but also with inner strength, inspiring personal and social life. In the minds of Christians, the feminine ideal was seen on the borderline between heaven and earth, which predetermined the significance of such woman's hypostasis as girlhood with her chastity and humility, and, in the highest sense, represented the sophistic beauty of the Virgin Mary.

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