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Subject of cossack-kharakternyk in the Ukrainian information space

Yarokh A. Subject cossacks-kharakternyks in the Ukrainian information space. The display of the theme of cossack-kharakternyk in the Ukrainian information space is considered. It is shown of perceptions, interpretations of this content in some discourses. It is made the characteristic of the modern communication grounds, which discusses the topic of cossack-kharakternyk.

Keywords: *information space, the cossacks-kharakternyks (magician), content, discourse, Internet communication.*

Ярох А. І. Тема козаків-характерників в українському інформаційному просторі. Розглянуто відображення теми козаків-характерників в українському інформаційному просторі. Показані особливості уявлень, інтерпретацій, формування цього контенту у різних дискурсах. Дана характеристика сучасним комунікаційним майданчикам, на яких обговорюється тема козаків-характерників.

Ключові слова: *інформаційний простір, казаки-характерники, контент, дискурс, інтернет-комунікації.*

Ярох А. И. Тема казаков-характерников в украинском информационном пространстве. Рассмотрено отображение темы казаков-характерников в украинском информационном пространстве. Показаны особенности представлений, интерпретаций этого контента в различных дискурсах. Дана характеристика современным коммуникационным площадкам, на которых обсуждается тема казаков-характерников.

Ключевые слова: *информационное пространство, казаки-характерники, контент, дискурс, интернет-коммуникации.*

The interest of Ukrainians to the past of our country, its history and culture is growing now. Cossacks-kharakternyks is a well-known phenomenon in Ukrainian culture. People's mythologized consciousness endowed them with supernatural powers. Theme of cossacks-kharakternyk was reflected in folk art, in literature, sculpture, visual arts, music, and exploration of scientists. It is presented in the Ukrainian media space since the XV-the century and up to the present time. It involves a lot of mysterious, but is poorly understood. The image of the cossack-kharakternyk differently emerges, is interpreted and used in different discourses: mythological, esoteric, scientific, historical, ideological, and others.

Therefore, the following objectives are relevant to the article: to consider the characteristics of the formation and interpretation of cossack-kharakternyks in Ukrainian information space in a variety of discourses, to characterize modern communication platforms, which discusses the issue of cossacks-kharakternyks.

The article deals with the following types of discourses¹ related with kharakternyk topic: conventionally «traditional» and «ethno historical» discourses.

1. The traditional discourse — is the one in which subjects of communication play within the conventional, well-established systems of concepts, ideas and interpretations of the events related to Kharakternyk, perception of them as part of the glorious history of the Zaporiz'ky cossacks and Zaporiz'ka Sich.

2. Ethno historical discourse — is the one in which subjects of communication acts with faith in the ancient pre-Christian roots of kharakternyk (its link with Aryan heritage, with the Magi —

¹ Given the vagueness of the term «discourse» to specify the value in which it is used in this article. Discourse is a complex expression of the subject (s) of real events in the communication process. It is both the process and outcome of communication. Within a particular kind of discourse they manifest certain pragmatic or ideological inclination of subjects of communication, their beliefs, faith, interests. This affects the system of concepts and their interpretation in this discourse. At a theoretical level typology of discourses discussed in the article by A. Bakun [2].

kharakternyks, with Runvira². It is obvious that in addition to these discourses, there are other interesting discourses of cossack-kharakternyk issues that is worth investigating.

Consider the image of cossack-kharakternyk in traditional discourse in which kharakternyk is assigned the role to be part of the cultural heritage associated with the glorious history of Cossacks and Zaporiz'ka Sich. This discourse is presented in the Ukrainian media space in various forms, as works of art, publications in mass media, academic texts, visual arts, folk elegies, songs, and even in modern computer games. Subjects of communications in this discourse give kharakternyk both real and mythological features, create image-legend.

By kharakternyks were called those cossacks of the Sich, who were engaged in guessing, treating the wounded cossacks, provided psychotherapeutic and physical education. Modern language these were people with supernatural abilities. Official Church accused kharakternyks in black magic. But thanks to a democratic social order at the Zaporiz'ka Sich kharakternyktstvo was not only persecuted but rather gained distribution. All cossacks respected the kharakternyks and the people sang of them in their songs (duma) and legends, drew them on the pictures.

Mythological image of cossack-kharakternyk is based on literature, historical eyewitness, folk legends and tales. People give him many mystical and sometimes even fantastic features. It has magic, can see future, events hundreds of miles in other countries, can influence people's minds, heal mortal wounds (even revive the dead), find treasures, get away with it. The texts about kharakternyks mention their ability to stop the blood, to ease the pain, catch bullets with his bare hands, walking on water and fire, to be under water for hours, become invisible, appear in several places at once and cause panic in the enemy [11]. Kharakternyks could control the weather — to disperse the cloud or, alternatively, invoke rain. Also believed that kharakternyk could be killed only by a silver bullet into the heart. Therefore kharakternyks often were the first to go into battle. According to a legend some cossack's hetmans, koshovyj atamans and famous colonels were kharakternyks. Among them Dmytro Baidavishnevetsky, Ivan Pidkova, Samiylo Kishka,

Severin Nalyvayko, Petro Sahaidachny, Maxim Kryvonis, Dmytro Nechay and the most famous kharakternyk — Ivan Sirko.

Most of the stories and legends about kharakternyks were recorded in Ukraine only in the nineteenth century although the phenomenon is ancient, and the first mention of them is found in the chronicles relating to the second half of the XVI century. To creating the image of kharakternyk joined many famous Ukrainian writers. Dmytro Yavornytsky, a writer, historian, archaeologist, ethnographer in 1892 wrote a history of the zaporiz'ky cossacks [14]. In it he described kharakternyks as such «whom neither water, nor a sword, nor an ordinary bullet but silver couldn't taken by. These «kharakternyks» could unlock locks without keys, cross the river on a rug or a mat, take with bare hands red-hot cannonballs, to see in several layers around using special «vert-sadel», live at the bottom of the river, climb up and get out of the tightly tied or even sewn bags...». Born in an old family of cossacks, a Ukrainian writer Eugen Grebinka wrote the novel «Tchaikovsky» in 1843 which is based on family remittances [4]. In it he sees kharakternyktstvo as the possession of an old chivalric tradition. In 1846, Panteleimon Kulish's novel «Black Council» [10] describes the cossacks-kharakternyks. Taras Shevchenko, giving a portrait of Colonel from the poem «Kerchief», succinctly calls him — «kharakternyk from Sich».

We should mention Adrian Feofanovych Kashchenko (1858–1921) — Ukrainian writer, author of numerous prose works of memorable heroics of Zaporiz'ka Sich. He wrote stories: «Zaporiz'ka glory», «At the Sich ruins», «Journey to the Dnipro rapids», «On Hetman Saja-dachny», «Great Meadow Zaporiz'kyj». In the stories «From the Dnieper to the Danube», «Ruined Nest» he showed the tragic fate of the Cossacks after the destruction of the Zaporiz'ka Sich. In the Soviet Ukraine works by Adrian Kashchenko were openly red until 1933, and then — undeserved oblivion of beige a «bourgeois nationalist». Today websites «Ukrainian Center» [16] and «Ukrainian Union» [13] are returning his works to readers. Author's books in electronic format are presented on these sites.

The current author Taras Kalyandruk in his studies [8–9] introduces the history and development of spirituality and culture of cossacks-kharakternyks. The researcher believes that «kharakternyks' mission was to save the soul of the Ukrainian people». The author describes Ukrainian martial arts, which had cossack-kharakternyks, history, philosophy and psychology of the Ukrainian knight fighting spirit.

² Runvira — Native Ukrainian National Faith. This is the faith in the One God Dazhbog. It was established by Spiritual Teacher and Prophet Lion Sylenko by reforming the ancient (pre-Christian) faith. The first Runvira community was registered in 1966 in Chicago. Runvira seeks to preserve native culture, language, customs and rituals Ukrainian-Ruthenian lands (Wikipedia).

Information on kharakternyky is also in the works on the history of zaporiz'ky cossacks by Myhajlo Hrushevsky [5], Vitaly Shcherbakov [15], and Vladimir Golobutsky [3]. To scientific sources on the subject, you can also add studies of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy on the history of Ukrainian cossacks [6].

Mystical halo that has always existed around cossacks-kharakternyky, evident in the folk image of Mamaj Cossack, reflected in folk tales, dumas and other creative works. «Cossack-bandurist», «Cossack-zaporozhets», «Cossack-Mamaj» — these are titles of the paintings. The basis of the composition of paintings is always a figure of Cossack, who sits with his legs crossed on the eastern way. It's posing of meditating warrior. In mythologized consciousness of Ukrainians Cossack Mamaj endowed with features of kharakternyk. No other work of the ancient Ukrainian folk art was not destined to live a long life in so many variants, reiterations and copies.

Ethnic art critic Tatiana Poshyvaylo believes that at a time when the Zaporiz'ka army no longer existed in the image of Cossack on folk paintings, was perceived as a kind of monument to the heroic past of the Ukrainian people. In dumas and dreams of Ukrainians he embodied the power of the people spirit, invincibility will during the holy struggle against oppressors. Having acquired a significant spread in Ukraine in the XVIII–XIX centuries, folk painting «Cossack-Mamaj» sanctified almost every Ukrainian house, forming a kind of a sacred complex with the traditional iconic images. «Cossack-Mamaj» was being painted on canvas and on the walls of houses, on the doors and shutters, on the tiles and chests. Painting of this cossack sometimes appeared even on linden hives [17]. His image is acquired to be a value talisman, a house guard.

An outstanding researcher Platon Beletsky made an assumption that the probable explanation for the origin of the composition of «Cossack Mamaj» painting could be Buddhist icons that cossacks could see at the tents of soldiers in the Mongol-Tatar army or among things belonging to Kalmyk Buddhists with whom the cossacks in 1639–1642 years were allies. Later this compositional scheme could be used on a painting of Cossack-Mamaj.

Consider the so called «ethno historical» discourse associated with belief in the ancient roots of kharakternyky. Participants of this discourse emphasize kharakternyk's relationship with Aryan heritage of Ukraine, with the wise men, with the pre-Christian so called Native Ukrainian National Faith — «Runvira».

Ethno historical discourse has acquired a significant spread in the modern Ukrainian information space. He attended many educational web portals which promote Ukrainian history and culture. In the section «History» frequent articles or posts on the forums about the cossacks-kharakternyky. In social networks there are many private and public groups on relevant topics. Summarizing the posts by discussants [1; 18–22], we formulate the essence of views on kharakternyky in ethno historical discourse.

Ukrainians are descendants of the Aryan tribes that formed as a cultural and social community in the Black Sea area from where they had settled to Europe and Asia. The sacred book of the Hindus «Rig Veda» tells that in the second millennium BC in India came the tribes of nomad's pastoralists — «Aryans». The invaders were tall, had white skin. Local blacks at that time knew neither law nor gods. There is a mention of the residuals. This is probably those who remained in the indigenous territory that is in the territory of modern Ukraine.

Slavic pagan religion, which we, incidentally know a little, has shared with the Indian Vedas ideas. Sanskrit root which is registered in the name of the Vedas also enter in the Ukrainian word «vidaty» and means «to know». Vedas are of great importance for the reconstruction of pre-Ukrainian beliefs which direct records have not survived.

We can see the parallels between the warriors — Kshatriyas in Aryan traditions and warriors — Cossacks in days of Zaporiz'ka Sich. An essential sign of Aryan warriors-Kshatriyas was a chuper (forelock), or as it is sometimes called «kosa» (braid) — a strand of hair that grew from the crown of the head (hence — «kosak»). Wearing a braid meant belonging to the Kshatriya caste of warriors. Folk call this particular cossack's hairstyle «oseledets». It is a sacred symbol of a direct communion with God. Modern Rajputs³ in India, who also consider themselves descendants of the Aryan Kshatriya warriors have long whiskers, which, like the cossacks, they twist behind the ears, and a «chuper» — a strand of hair on the head, which is called like our «chup». They also wear trousers and wide belts. At its billboards and signs, Rajputs anciently placed trident — a sign of Shiva. It should be added that of the Aryans preserved among the cossacks different words. The scientists claim that the Ukrainian language preserved many words

³ «Rajputs» in Sanskrit means the sons of kings. Came to northern India in the VI century as conquerors and settlers, but soon became the main defenders.

from Sanskrit roots. Ethno linguistic studies in this direction were made by Ostap Nalyvayko [12]. From here it is concluded: cossacks — the descendants of Aryans. Some subjects of communication put «volhvy» (magicians) in the chain between the Aryans-Kshatriyas and the cossacks. Proponents of this idea believe that the «volhvy» were guardians of Vedic knowledge. The handbook of ancient mythology (posted on the site «Ukrainian Literature»: <http://www.ukrlit.vn.ua/habits/o16c.html>) tells of this magicians as follows: «The «volhvy» — are ancient priests of pagan worship. Holders of the ancient Ukrainian culture and spirituality, traditional medicine, knowledge of astronomy, mathematics, geography, and the like. They cared of the ancient Ukrainians' spiritual level, built houses of worship and observance pagan calendar, protected the sacred forests, groves, rivers. They were the first thinkers of a civilized world, the authors of «Veles book» and Askold records. After 988 «volhvy»-magicians were persecuted by all kinds and physically killed off. These days they headed anti-feudal struggle of people to limit monarchical power of princes, to restore power of viche (congregation) and pagan faith».

With the destruction of the «volhvy» scientific knowledge of the Ukrainian national history and culture experienced significant losses. And thanks to the fact that among the magicians was many powerful creative personalities, they were able to transfer the part of our history into epic songs. Historical thoughts and ballads contributed to preserving the memory of people of his origin. Volodymyr Pilate, the founder of Fighting Gopak Style, Head of the Holy Union of the sons and daughters of Runvira (see footnote earlier) believes that «after the baptizing of Rus' «volhvy», priests and warriors, guards of churches were persecuted by princes and Greeks. So they united in hidden and remote communities far off large cities and began to create Siches (settlements). On the islands of the Dnieper, on the Dniester and the Bug coasts, in the Carpathians and numerous forests of Ukraine (Rus') volhvy founded schools of combat training and hardening in which the warrior path to the heights of perfection leaned on native belief, age-old customs and traditions». Communicators in ethno historical discourse suggest that cossacks-kharakternyks exercised an old pagan faith and have adopted from the magicians not only secret knowledge about man, nature and space, but also fighting practice. In the case of Volodymyr Pilate is an active advocate of restoring the traditions of martial arts of cossacks-kharakternyks in contemporary «combat hopak». So Sich was a real treasure trove of ancient spiri-

tual and military traditions that date back to its roots deep into the millennium.

Mythological image of a cossack-kharakternyk in the popular mind is Cossack Mamaj. He is paid a lot of attention in ethno historical discourse. Poster of site «Ukrainian online community» Yuri Denysyuk draws attention to the similarity of Mamaj images and iconographic images of deities in Eastern cultures (e.g. Buddha, Shiva and his incarnations), that indicates on a sacral image. On dedicated status of Mamaj indicates his ritual meditative posture and forelock so-called «Cossack oseledets» whose tradition of wearing is originated in Aryan culture and symbolizes the connection with God.

Igor Kaganets in his book «A Nation of gold collar» develops the idea embodied in the image of Mamaj of two incarnations: the incarnation of the sage-philosopher (in the Aryan tradition — Brahmin) and cossack warrior incarnation (in the Aryan tradition — Kshatriya). Here is how he describes the image of Mamaj on folk paintings. «At first glance — this is pure Kshatriya — cossack: with him a sword and a quiver of arrows, a saddled horse along. However, after looking more closely, we see that the Mamaj is sitting in a strange pose for Ukrainian as if being in a state of meditation. His eyes focused away. It seems that we have found only the body, the physical sheath, and the soul flew to heaven. Perhaps in this way Mamaj charge himself with cosmic energy or is filled with divine wisdom through prayer. In his hand we see a bandura, which further reinforces the impression that we face a poet and philosopher, priest and sage. His face filled with unearthly serenity and kindness, enthusiasm and love [7].

The following provides an overview of sites where there is topic kharakternyks' in both «traditional» and the «ethno historical» discourses. The site of the library and information center «Word» [1] was the first Nikopol regional hub of information for the general public, which deals with the storage, preservation, transmission of information in electronic form. The site has published material on the history of Nikopol region (one hundred and fifty articles, including 25 dedicated to Cossacks). This is not surprising, because nikopols people believe their region is the capital of zaporiz'ky cossacks. Only on a cossack chieftain of the Chortomlyk Sich Ivan Dmytrovych Sirko it contains 18 articles.

The site «Ukrainian Center» [18] is a large collection of literature on historical themes and a large forum. The purpose of the private project «Ukrainian national internet portal «Aratta». «Window on Ukraine» [22] is to present Ukraine as a state in the global information space as unbi-

ased and close to reality, forming yet positive image of Ukraine as a state in which formed the first principles of a democratic society, the creation of interactive attractiveness of cultural, historical, spiritual, naturalistic attractions, traditions, values and achievements of their own ethnic culture and Indo-European civilization, the opening of «white spots» of history. Portal has started on March 1, 2006. There placed a large number of articles of various subjects, there are news and a forum. Surprisingly it was found that the top ten most popular publications on the site included publication by Eugen Luciŭ «Who are the Cossacks-kharakternyks. On the site ARATTA the article by Taras Kalyandruk «Lost Legacy? Who are the Cossacks-kharakternyks» and the forum on this topic are also popular.

The site «Ukrainian online community» [21] presents itself as «a community of people who have something to say». For the visitors, site administrators apply as follows: «Greetings, traveler. Congratulations you travel. Among the vast, though Ukrainian steppe, the expanse of the Internet you came to the place where you can relax the soul. You slowly will read poetry and prose, will reflect on the meaning of philosophical treatises, or take part in heated discussions — all on your taste. In any case, you have the opportunity to learn a lot and unfold yourself. Welcome to the family!». On this site for tag «history» found 32 articles, 7 of which are associated with kharakternyk. These are the following articles: «Cossack-kharakternyk. Is he Ukrainian ninja or samurai?», «Journey to the Past. Kharakternyks. Memoirs Ages», «Journey to the Past. Kharakternyks. Mystery of the concept», «Journey to the Past. Kharakternyks. Folk memory», «Journey to the Past. Vedic view on Kharakternyks», «Kharakternytsvo as a system of esoteric knowledge and practices», «Image Cossack Mamaj in the context of Aryan heritage of Ukraine».

The site «Gaydamak» (Independent Information Educational Resources) was established in March 2002 in order to spread information about the history of Ukraine in scientific and popular

form [16]. The site contains a large number of scanned books and articles on the history of Ukraine, including the periods associated with the cossacks. For example: the article «Cossack Mamaj — the image of a warrior and philosopher» from the book «A Nation of gold-collar» by Igor Kaganets and other articles.

A specialized site «Kharakternyk — Forum on Cossacks' secrecy» [19] collects visitors who have common interests in the following areas: self-improvement, pursuit of truth, hardening, understanding the world, molfarstvo, esotericism, Ukrainian spirituality. Powered since 2007. Today Online has five branches. The first branch «History, Legends, Mention on Kharakternyk» contains themes: history, legends, stories, theory of extraordinary ability cossacks-kharakternyks. The second branch of «Worldview, spirituality, belief» is all about the spiritual, magical achievements of Ukrainians, about molfars, sorcerers and the like. The third branch «Cossack's mode of life, order, political component» offers everything related to the cossacks, but beyond phenomenon of kharakternytsvo. On the fourth branch of the forum «Health: physical and spiritual» is discussed healing, herbal treatments, help people, wisdom. The fifth branch «Not Ukrainian currents, religious schools and faith» is devoted to the spiritual achievements of mankind.

The site «Ukrainian Union» [18] was founded in 2001. Here large collection of materials (books or fragments thereof, publicistics) by section history, culture, poetry electronically stored. There is a collection of Ukrainian prose writer Adrian Kashchenko on cossack day theme. One of the projects of the site «Ukrainian Union» is a «Ukrainian electronic library EXLIBRIS» [20], which offers publicistics, fiction, materials on history.

Given the above statements, you can confidently conclude that the topic on cossacks-kharakternyks in Ukrainian information space is actively represented and requires a separate and in-depth study.

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