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**“PUBLIC IMAGES OF SENTIMENT” FOR PEASANTS: LUBOK PICTURES  
IN THE CONTEXT OF UKRAINIAN CULTURAL EXPERIENCE**

**Abstract.** *The purpose of the research is to analyze the Ukrainian lubok pictures of the end of the XIXth – the beginning of the XXth centuries as a part of a popular culture and as a communication channel of re-actualization of the Ukrainian cultural experience among the peasantry. The methodology of the research is based on application of the interdisciplinary approach at the intersection of peasant, art, and popular culture studies, and ethnology. The analysis of lubok phenomenon is carried out within the concept of lubok culture as a cross-cultural communication boundary. The Scientific Novelty.* For the first time the attention was drawn to the Ukrainian pictorial lubok as “popular images of sentiment” (C. Geertz), “naive” visual imagery of which concealed layers of synthetic scope of the Ukrainian popular culture of the XVIth – the XXth centuries. In the article there has been revealed coexistence of the remains of early-modern and contemporary popular visual art in the XIXth century and its influence on cultural consciousness of the peasantry. **The Conclusions.** *At the the end of the XIXth – the beginning of the XXth the origins of the mass visual art with the Ukrainian lubok pictures being its part date back to the birth of popular icon-painting, engraving and related artistic practices of the XVIth – the XVIIth centuries. Modifications of “popular images of sentiment” reflect changes in a socio-cultural situation. Tradition of visual images reproduction was transformed at the end of the XVIIIth – the beginning of the XIXth centuries. Reduction in the system of images postured as Ukrainian as well as emphasis on their ethnographic and rustic component limits the understanding of “authentic Ukrainian” as a pre-modern, hierarchically subordinated phenomenon. At the same time popular artistic images give the opportunity to keep public field for actualization, sensory and emotional appropriation of the Ukrainian-centric narrative; the possibility of self-identification of the peasants with a community for whom the reproducible cultural codes were known and common opened a window for a dialogue with the past contributing to its incorporation into the fabric of current culture.*

**Key words:** *Ukrainian lubok picture, cultural experience, popular visual culture, emotionally-shaped education of peasants, identity.*

## **“ПУБЛІЧНІ ОБРАЗИ ВІДЧУВАННЯ” ДЛЯ СЕЛЯН: ОБРАЗОТВОРЧІ ЛУБКИ У КОНТЕКСТІ УКРАЇНСЬКОГО КУЛЬТУРНОГО ДОСВІДУ**

**Анотація. Мета дослідження.** Розглянути українські образотворчі лубки зламу XIX – XX ст. як складову популярної культури і комунікативний канал реактуалізації українського культурного досвіду серед селянства. **Методологія дослідження** полягає у застосуванні міждисциплінарного підходу на перетині селянознавства, мистецтвознавства, етнології та студій популярної культури. Аналіз феномену лубків здійснений у межах концепту лубкової культури як помежів’я міжкультурних комунікацій. **Наукова новизна.** Вперше привернуто увагу до українських образотворчих лубків як “публічних образів відчуження” (К. Гірці), за “наївним” візуальним рядом яких приховані пласти синтетичного простору української популярної культури XVI – XX ст. Вказано на співіснування у XIX ст. решток ранньомодерного і новочасного популярного візуального мистецтва як чинника впливу на культурну свідомість селянства. **Висновки.** Витоки масового візуального мистецтва зламу XIX – XX ст., частиною якого були українські образотворчі лубки, сягають часів зародження у XVI – XVII ст. народного ікономалярства, гравєрства і споріднених з ними художніх практик. Модифікації “публічних образів відчуження” відбивають зміни соціокультурної ситуації. Традиція репродукування візуального ряду зазнає трансформації на зламі XVIII – XIX ст. Редукування системи образів, позиціонованих як українські, наголос на їх етнографічній і рустикальній складовій, сприяють обмеженню розуміння “українськості” як домодерного, ієрархічно підпорядкованого явища. Водночас популярні мистецькі образи уможливають зберегти публічне поле для актуалізації і чуттєво-емоційної апропріації україноцентричного наративу; можливості самоотождення селян зі спільнотою, для якої відтворювані культурні коди були знайомими і спільними, відкривали вікно діалогу з минулим, сприяючи його вживлянню до тканинитодішньої культури.

**Ключові слова:** українські образотворчі лубки, культурний досвід, популярна візуальна культура, емоційно-образна освіта селян, ідентичність.

**The Problem Statement.** At the end of the XIXth – the beginning of the XXth centuries emancipatory changes, commercialization of peasantry (life of “people”) in the Ukrainian provinces under the Russian rule led to an increase in demand for new popular cultural forms, one of which was art lubok (pictures decorated with captions; a subtype of mass commercial printed production). Ir. Zhytetsky called them “living literature of the people” (Zhytetskyi, 1890), and B. Hrinchenko – “the only folk paintings”, emphasizing their educational and communicative function: “the peasants stuck the walls with them, read them, and were taught by them” (Hrinchenko, 1891). Peasants – mostly “new readers” or illiterates (in 1897 there were 91 – 96% illiterate of the rural population) (Kravchenko, 1997, p. 43) – pictures with texts entertained and taught, being a special type of emotional and figurative education that went beyond the educational project or folk pedagogy.

Popular visual images aimed at the mass consumer not only “reflected his tastes and ideas, his ideology and theology” (Plochy, 2018, pp. 107–108) or helped to adapt to the reception of the new reality but they were also an important communication channel between traditional and modern cultural symbols and codes. The “primitive” simplified visual series of non-elite art obscured the unreflected cultural strata on the margin of which the Ukrainian tradition of mass commercial popular visual art was formed and corresponded to, influencing the matrix formation of peasants’ cultural consciousness.

**The Analysis of Recent Research and Publications.** The history of art lubok is usually analyzed in the context of imperial and Russian cultural experience (bibliographic review: Chuchvaha, 2019). The Ukrainian educators of the end of the XIXth – the beginning the XXth centuries were the first ones to draw attention to the fact of the existence of the Ukrainian lubok (brochures and pictures with the Ukrainian-language texts or plots on the Ukrainian

themes) (Zhytetskyi, 1890; Hrinchenko, 1891), and were interested in developing the national language of popular visual culture as a means of forming a national identity. In the 2010s, this issue is back in scientific circulation in studies of the intermediate nature of popular literature (Hundorova, 2013), the role of lubok pictures in ensuring the Ukrainian-language reading (Karoyeva, 2015; Karoyeva, 2021) and within the analysis of the Ukrainian popular printed materials according to the concept of “street publications” (Voloshenko, 2019). The study of the issue acquires special importance against the background of research focus on the issues of the Ukrainian nation-formation of the end of the XIXth – the beginning of the XXth centuries (Smolii & Vermenych, 2021) and the role of artistic practices in this process (Novakovych, Katrych & Chacinski, 2021).

**The purpose of the study** is to analyze the Ukrainian artistic lubok pictures of the end of the XIXth – the beginning of the XXth centuries as a component of popular culture and a communicative channel for the re-actualization of the Ukrainian cultural experience among the peasantry.

The need to involve a range of visual sources when analyzing peasant history issues (Prysyazhnyuk, 2018) is actualized by means of interdisciplinary research methods at the intersection of peasant studies, art history, ethnology, visual studies (Kovalevska, 2019) and popular culture research (Berk, 2001), using the approach of considering culture as communication (Hrytsenko, 1998). The phenomenon of art lubok pictures is analyzed within the concept of lubok culture as a “tranhistorical and transcultural field”, which “combines multi-ethnic, multi-class and multi-ethnic interests”, is “the boundary between old and new traditions” (Hundorova, 2013, p. 277). Theoretically grounded are the theses of K. Hirts on the demand to place “public images of sentiment” in art (Geerts, 2004, pp. 63, 96).

**The Main Material Statement.** The beginnings of the general imperial lubok picture tradition are associated with the arrival of Western European engravings (wood carvings) in Moscow Tsardom at the end of the XVIIth century and circulation of painted and printed lubok pictures in Russia since the XVIIIth century (Reytblat, 1990, p. 7). As a formalized phenomenon of commercial art and printing, lubok culture emerged from the 1830s to the 1860s, under the conditions of government regulation of publishing pictures “for the people”. The development of the Ukrainian popular culture was influenced by the government regulations of 1864 and 1876 additionally (Voloshenko, 2019, p. 242).

Ir. Zhytetsky dates the appearance of the Ukrainian art lubok pictures in 1879. However, the origins of this cultural phenomenon are deeper and rooted in the Ukrainian traditions of icon painting, book and easel graphics, which become the basis for the formation of early modern popular visual art. Under the conditions of urban development, handicrafts and fair trade “folk icon painting” goes beyond the monastic environment from the XVIth century (Shchupak & Tymoshenko, 2013). In the 1630s the phenomenon of “folk easel engraving” was formed: paper icons were cheaper and more accessible than painted ones (Shpak, 1997). The public demand for popular art products was confirmed by the differentiation of icons types: home, carved in the form of crosses, processional, road, made on boards and canvases, etc. One of the reasons for the decline of folk engraving and icon painting is the spread of chromolithographed paper icons pasted on boards since 1870. Odesa publishing houses of Ye. Fesenko and I. Tyl were the first ones to publish chromolithographed paper icons in the Russian Empire. The demand for graphic prints of icons also caused the mass production of photographs of saints (Osadcha, 2010). The tradition of creating painted “folk paintings” was related to iconography. Thus, at the end of the XVIIIth century paintings depicting a

Cossack bandurist were performed by artists of painting schools at the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra and Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, and in the XVIIIth century this image started to belong to the realm of popular art (Biletskyi, 1960). Artistic practices of folk sculpture were related to folk painting (Mozdyr, 1980).

Samples of “non-canonical” artistic creativity were widely sold since the end of the XVIIth century (Shpak, 1997). Representatives of the Cossacks, artisans, merchants, schoolchildren, spudei, and travelling deacons acted as mediators who popularized new aesthetic and ideological landmarks. At the end of the XVIIIth century “folk paintings” became part of peasant mode of life (Osadcha, 2010). It is believed that the “folk character” of icons and engravings of that period is determined by the following: violation of established prescriptions, simplified iconography, little use of pictorial means, transimacy, hereditary and reproductive method of image reproduction, long-term recurrence of iconographic and compositional schemes (Shpak, 1997; Lykhach & Honchar, 2017). Imitation of high art styles turns into the transformation of the new “into something like the long familiar old” (Berk, 2001, p. 301). The canons of local artistic traditions, Byzantine iconography, the Renaissance and Baroque art samples are “digested” in the style of the Ukrainian folk art. The plot repertoire corresponds to apocrypha and hagiography (Shpak, 1997). Peculiarities of the shape of lubok pictures of the XIXth century are connected with the sacred culture – decoration of pictures with captions, multi-plot part of the images. For example, the visual connection between the text and the image, although in a different form, is already observed in the design of the “Kyiv Psalter” (1397): the pictures on its edges are connected by lines with the corresponding places in the text (Nelhovskiy, Stepovyk & Chlenova, 1976). The imported German and Dutch engraved Bibles are the direct prototype of lubok picture form. Each sheet contains visual images supplemented by biblical quotations. From professional religious engraving, the type of image with captions shifted to religious and secular popular painting. Analogies with the multipart form of lubok pictures evoke compositional schemes of life icons, in which marks with scenes of the lives of saints are placed around the central image (Burkovska, 2017). The icons of the XVIth century with a poly-ribbon composition were compositionally closer to the lubok multi-plot pictures (presented in the exposition of the National Art Museum). It is important to note that at the end of the XIXth – the XXth centuries psalters and hagiography were in great demand among peasants.

Works of folk engraving and icon painting were produced in a common cultural field, which is the evidence of close contacts between engravers and painters, the involvement of icon painters into the production of wood carvings. Practices of professional and amateur performance were also mixed. Folk wood carvings were made by both “traveling printers” and professionals at monasteries. In the XVIIIth century a significant number of professional craftsmen started to produce folk engravings, migrated to the periphery in search of markets due to ousting of wood carving techniques by chalcography. Tightening bans on the dissemination of folk art, the decline of monastic printing houses led to the intensification of private underground centers. One of them functioned in Podil in Kyiv (Shpak, 1997).

At the end of the XVIIIth – the XIXth centuries traditions of the Ukrainian early modern visual popular art were transformed under the influence of a number of socio-cultural factors – changes in the localization of art centers, narrowing the opportunities for exchange of skills and orientation at works of Western European art. At the same time, there intensified the mutual influences of art and handicraft practices in ceramics, carpet weaving, Easter eggs painting, quilting, weaving, carving, etc. (Yurchenko, 1967; Goshko, 1979; Stankevych,

2002). Demands for home decoration, decorative painting of houses and household buildings grew (Berchenko, 1930). Favourite subjects of folk pictures were also used in the design. Thus, at the beginning of the XXth century printed images of Mamai decorated the walls of peasant houses, painted images of Mamai – doors, furniture and even hives. The image of the modern “mamai” – Taras Bulba – circulated widely. Increasing the range and sales of decorative and applied arts accelerated the circulation of visual images. The domestic nature of their appropriation adjusted the outline of mass aesthetic tastes towards utilitarianism and decorativeness. In addition, along with the fact that lithographic Ukrainian art lubok pictures appeared only in the 1870s, during the period of the XIXth century in Chernihiv region there were centers preserved for the production of folk wood carvings (Shpak, 1997). Centers of folk icon painting were located in Chernihiv, Sumy and Poltava regions. “Bohomazy” (icon painters) worked in the villages. Specialized craft shops were established in Kyiv (Podil and Kurenivka) (Shchupak & Tymoshenko, 2013). In Poltava region such shops functioned until the 1920s (Lykhach & Honchar, 2017, p. 35). Industrial and artistic “folk” practices formed the aesthetic, value and technological basis for the preservation of the Ukrainian cultural experience against the background of mass spread of censored lubok production as a repeater of imperial cultural codes since the middle of the XIXth century. At the same time, the peculiarities of the cultural layer formation determined the inheritance by mass commercial art of only some of the previously formed art forms, which can be traced on the example of the transfer of thematic areas of popular visual art.

Secular themes of the Ukrainian lubok pictures of the XIXth century were not the latest heritage. Already in the miniatures of the “Kyiv Psalter” allegorical plots alternated with domestic and battle. From the XVth century in iconography, and from the XVth century – in engraving, the reflection of the real world sometimes acquired a “purely folk color”: the saints resemble peasants, genre scenes with household details were recreated, images of hell were saturated with folk humour (Nelhovskiy, 1976, pp. 52–55). From the end of the XVIth century household genre scenes in iconography became commonplace. Saturation with exquisite humour distinguished them from similar works of other cultures (Biletskyi, 1974, p. 49). Within the religious genre, military and civic plots appeared. From the field of professional early modern engraving of the XVIIth – the XVIIIth centuries originated the image of landscapes (Shpak, 1997), so popular among mass consumers at the end of the XIXth – the beginning of the XXth centuries.

Baroque culture, with its inherent desire for decoration and beauty, adds the national flavour to iconography. On one of the folk paintings that adorned the gates of the Lebedyn Monastery in Kyiv region allegorically there is depicted the Church (“a bride”) of Christ in the image of a Ukrainian girl; another folk painting contains images of peasant plowing (Diachenko, 1895). By spreading the image of a Cossack-bandurist the Cossack theme was popularized and modified in the XVIIIth century. Mamai became the personification of the national avenger, was associated with the haidamatsky movement. In folk painting his image was spread together with portraits of the heroes of Koliyivshchyna – I. Honta and M. Zaluzniak (Nelhovskiy, Stepovyk & Chlenova, 1976, pp. 74–75). In his poem “Eneida” I. Kotliarevsky mentioned the painted “portraits of all the bagatyrs” (Mamai and “Zhelezniak”) and fairy-tale heroes – Teleshyk, Zheretia and Kotyhorokh (Hundorova, 2013). By the end of the XVIIIth century historical and mythological-fairy-tale plots had been also used in folk engraving.

Secular themes in folk wood carvings appeared with the simplification of engraving techniques simultaneously, increasing the tendency to secularize and primitivize images, their

decorative solution. Images of domestic and "anecdotal" character adorn sheet icons, often hand-painted with paints. At the beginning of the XXth century masters of folk engraving gave up using previous artistic and technological techniques finally (Shpak, 1997). Since the end of the XVIIIth century similar processes took place in folk iconography. During the XIXth century, according to iconographic interpretations, the folk icon became closer the folk picture, with its inherent folklore and national motifs and "naive" images. The localization of icons in houses changed: they were placed not only in the corner, but also on the walls, like paintings (Osadcha, 2010), i.e., there was profanation of consumption practice of icon painting.

Merging with ethnographic cultural forms, the modified remnants of early modern visual culture continued producing "public images of sentiment" during the XIXth century. The space of modern popular culture was formed next to (and in interaction with) these images: at the crossroads of the influence of Baroque literary, theatrical and artistic traditions, modernized forms of folklore, adaptations and stylizations of works of modern high Ukrainian literature and art. The Ukrainian language (and with it – the integrity of worldview, historical and cultural experience), "specifically Ukrainian content, Ukrainian themes and experiences", close to traditional genres (Grabowicz, 2003, p. 456), verbalize elite and popular Ukrainian cultural forms. B. Hrinchenko aptly noted the interaction of types of popular culture, linking the reasons for the demand for Ukrainian lubok images with success of the Ukrainian ethnographic theater (Hrinchenko, 1891).

These processes were not sterile. Due to the colonial situation in the cultural sphere, one artistic solution could become a substrate for the development of both national and imperial popular culture. Even during the XVIIIth century the part of the Ukrainian cultural heritage was absorbed into the general imperial cultural model. Since the end of the XVIIIth century attempts to adapt elements of the cultural complex, which had the Ukrainian linguistic and ethnographic basis, had begun. Moreover, these cultural blocs in the imperial body were received more as "orientalized", "provincial exoticism" (Hundurava, 2013, pp. 343–344), than the attributes of another culture.

Communicative properties of the Ukrainian lubok pictures of the XIXth century reflect the continuity and gaps in the invention of modernized symbolic artistic language. By the end of the XIXth century, in popular visual culture the works written in domestic, "humorous", landscape genres had been associated with "Ukraine" and "Ukrainian". Against the background of the Orthodox Church acquisition of the status of ideological support of the Russian Empire, the national connotation of the religious theme, which was previously widespread in the Ukrainian popular art, narrowed and reduced to stories about the wanders of the devil and ethnographic details of carols. Representation of military theme became the prerogative of the Russian lubok pictures. Visualized mentions of the Cossacks acquired a domestic character. With the inclusion of elements of the Ukrainian history in the imperial historical narrative, the images of individual Ukrainian hetmans were popularized. In addition, some wood carvings were destroyed under censorship in the 1830s. The fate of the popular arts was determined not only by administrative pressure.

By the middle of the XIXth century "exotic" Ukrainian themes, popularized through interest in the Ukrainian folklore and theater, the works of M. Gogol and M. Kostomarov, became well known in imperial educated circles and gained commercial potential in the eyes of the authors of lubok pictures, who spread them among the widest audience. The Ukrainian lubok pictures were produced, primarily, by Moscow publishers – in the same manner as other lubok pictures. By adapting such publications to the tastes of the Russian consumers,

publishers encouraged the deformation of the Ukrainian language and image system, forming a general imperial cultural space “from below”.

At the same time, own commercial publishing network, including publishers, emerged in Ukraine to serve the growing consumer interest. Despite the use of publishing algorithms of Moscow lubok painters, the Ukrainian artistic images and language were less tarnished in its products. Although in the shell of loyalty to the Russian Empire, but the scope of propaganda of the Ukrainian visual symbols expanded: since the 1860s the issue of “Malorosiysky” publications had been increasing; popular sketches of the Ukrainian history were published; in the 1870s, the public learned what the “Malorosiysky folk calendars” were. At the beginning of the XXth century the demand for replicated Ukrainian visual images was met not only by lubok pictures, but also in the field of graphic design (advertising, packaging production, etc.) (Hundorova, 2013, p. 350). The Ukrainian themes are even more widely popularized in the photo series “Types of Malorosiya” (“La Petite Russie”) and postcards. On the one hand, they reproduce the denationalized image of former peasants (“lackeys” and “maids”) who moved to towns and cities. On the other hand, patriarchal Ukrainian images known from folk paintings and wood carvings, modernized by prominent Ukrainian artists, were reproduced. Thus, at the beginning of the XXth century Kyiv publishing house “Rassvet” (1904 – 1916) published not only postcards with “bourgeois humour”, but also series of postcards with the Ukrainian landscapes, reproductions of works by S. Vasylykivsky, M. Pymonenko and the others. Kyiv publishing house “Chas” (1908 – 1920) published postcards with illustrations of the Ukrainian folk songs of A. Zhdakha (Kyrkach & Dukhin, 2013, pp. 3–4).

Even earlier, from the last quarter of the XIXth century, reproductions of paintings by the Ukrainian artists became a source of inspiration for lubok painters. According to the observations of Ir. Zhytetsky, lubok publishers copied the Ukrainian visual images from the works of K. Trutovsky, O. Slastion, M. Pymonenko, which popularized the Ukrainian themes in the Russian illustrated magazines “The World Illustration” (1869 – 1898), “The Nyva” (1869 – 1918), “The Rodina” (1879 – 1917) (Zhytetskyi, 1890). Of course, there were more artists who promoted the Ukrainian stories. For example, I. Izhakevych published a lot of works in “The Nyva” (Nelhovskiy, Stepovyk & Chlenova, 1976, p. 126). A. Zhdakha directly cooperated with “folk” publishing houses: the educational “Charitable Society for the Distribution of Cheap and Useful Books for People” (1898 – 1918) and Ye. Fesenko’s firm. The popular lubok image of a blind kobzar with a guide resembles the image from V. Sternberg’s etching to T. Shevchenko’s “Kobzar” (1840). Professional painters (S. Chuprynenko, M. Karazin, S. Vasylykivsky, etc.) developed the Ukrainian plots promoted by M. Gogol, especially Cossack and Christmas ones, which were also extremely popular in lubok art tradition.

Dating the appearance of the Ukrainian art lubok in 1879, Ir. Zhytetsky considers them modern work of that period of time. However, the system of images used by professionals, although passed through the ban on academicism, romanticism or realism, was not new. The system contained variations of familiar images (kobzars, Cossacks, girls, scenes of peasant life, landscapes), depicted in wood carvings, paintings and handicrafts. This tradition was not interrupted even after the Bolshevik ban on the production of lubok pictures in 1918: during the Soviet period of time, masters of folk paintings continue reproducing the image of the popular art at the end of the XIXth – the beginning of the XXth centuries (Naiden, 2018), preserving the space of contact with the Ukrainian heritage and the conditions for the formation of national identity.

**The Conclusions.** The origins of the mass visual art of the end of the XIXth – the beginning of the XXth centuries, the part of which were the Ukrainian art lubok pictures, date back to the XVIth – the XVII centuries – the origins of icon paintings, engraving and related artistic practices. Visual images of folk art combine the interactions of folklore and elite, church and secular, artistic and craft, authentic and borrowed cultural experiences. Modifications of “public images of sentiment” reflect changes in the socio-cultural life. The tradition of reproducing the visual series underwent transformation at the end of the XVIIIth – the XIXth centuries. Reducing the system of images positioned as “Ukrainian”, emphasizing their ethnographic and rustic component, contribute to limiting the understanding of “Ukrainianness” as a pre-modern, hierarchically subordinated phenomenon. The gap in cultural experience partially ousts the artistic understanding of social perspectives in the field of imperial culture. At the same time, popular artistic images give the opportunity to preserve the public field for the actualization and sensual appropriation of the Ukrainian-centric narrative.

When buying the “folk picture”, the peasants hardly thought about the ways of historical transfer of their favourite image, but at the level of emotional reception they identified themselves with the community, for which the reproduced cultural codes were clear and common, opened a window of dialogue with the past, contributing to its incorporation into the fabric of national culture.

The prospects for further research are related to the study of reception methods by peasants of visual images of mass art production.

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